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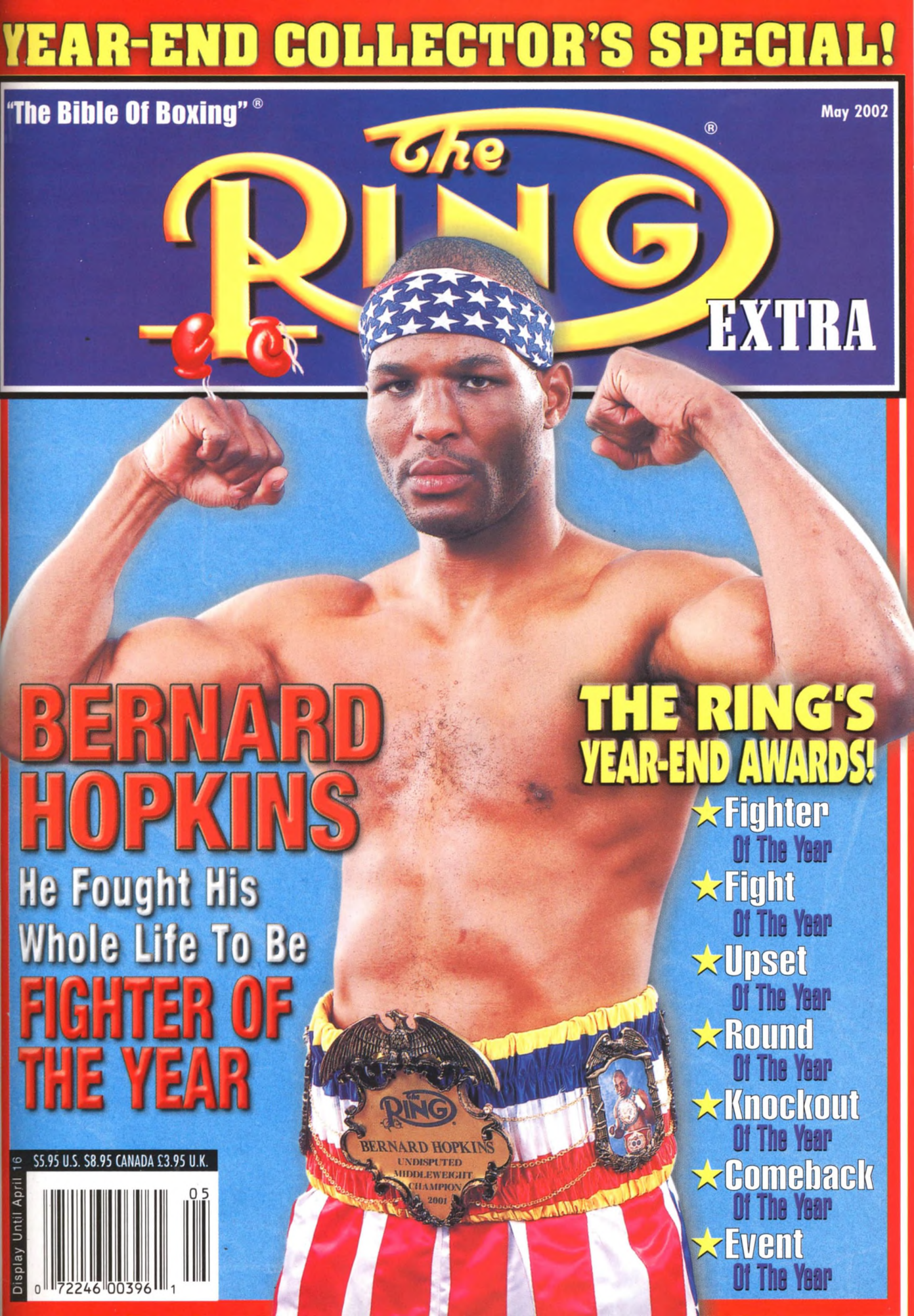

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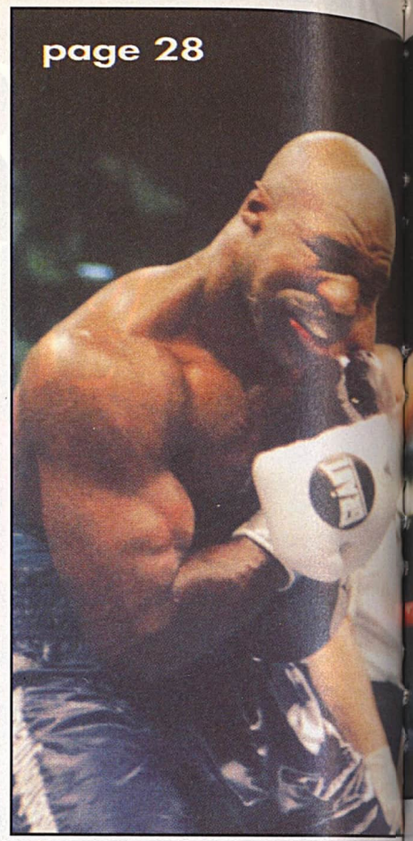

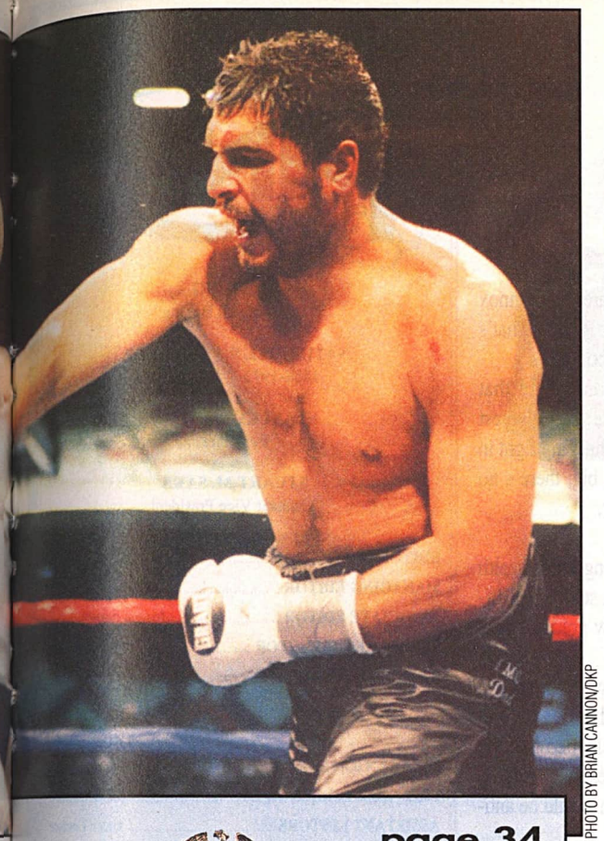
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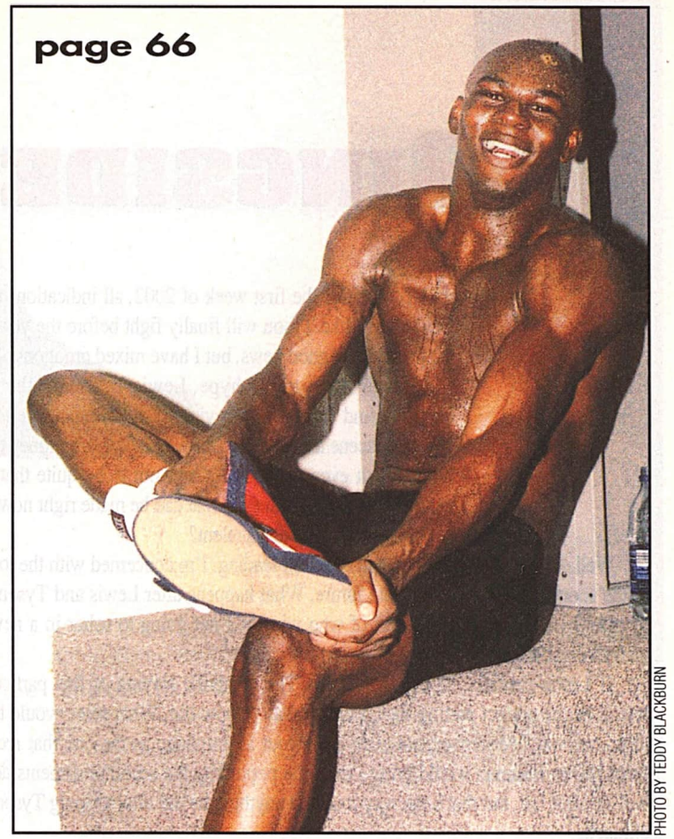

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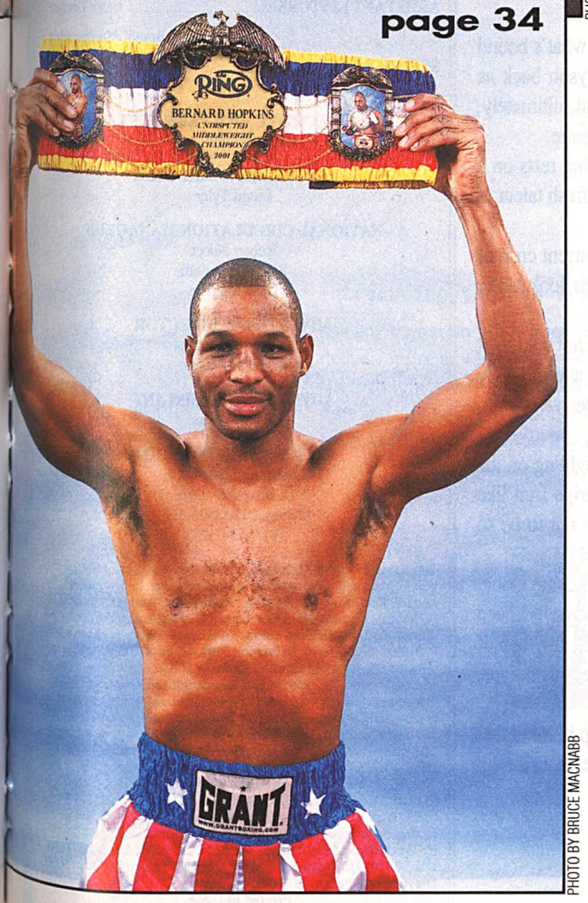

PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

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RINGSIDE

As I write this the first week of 2002, all indications are that Lennox Lewis and Mike Tyson will finally fight before the year is over. That's supposed to be good news, but I have mixed emotions about it.

If you listen to the hype, Lewis-Tyson is "the only fight that counts." And there's no denying that it would generate huge interest and an obscene amount of money, maybe more money than any fight in history. But even if it doesn't turn out to be quite that big, there's no denying it's the biggest fight that can be made right now.

So why am I so ambivalent?

Well, it's just that I wonder where it's all leading. I'm concerned with the long-range health of the sport, not just its immediate future. What happens after Lewis and Tyson settle their differences? Let's face it, regardless of who wins, it's not going to usher in a new golden era of heavyweight boxing.

If Lewis prevails, he ought to retire. The symbolic slaying of this particular old dragon would be the perfect parting shot, a classy way to bow out. What more would there be for him to do, anyway? Moreover, not even a blowout as emphatic as the one that reclaimed the title from Hasim Rahman would bring Lewis the popularity his accomplishments deserve. Nothing will. It's not fair, but that's the way it is, and anything he did after topping Tyson would be anticlimactic.

If Tyson wins—now there's a scary thought—we'll be plunged headlong into what's bound to be the weirdest chapter of a public life built on the bizarre. Sure, having Tyson back as champ will be good for the box office. The industry will enjoy a brief spike. But, ultimately, Tyson's appeal isn't really about boxing anymore. And that can't be good for the game.

Actually, I'm not very comfortable with either scenario. If the future of boxing rests on a one-and-done bonanza like Tyson-Lewis, the prognosis isn't good. Boxing needs fresh talent to prosper, and that's a big part of the problem. Probably the biggest.

It's new blood that keeps the meter running, but right now, the best of the current crop of heavyweight hopefuls are so ordinary, they make old heads like Tyson and Lewis look better than they really are at this point.

A lot of people believe Wladimir Klitschko is going to be the savior, but I'm not sold. Not by a long shot. Besides, the really big money is generated in the United States, and anybody who thinks a Ukrainian heavyweight is going to be an easy sell to American pay-per-view audiences is dreaming.

How reassuring it would be to have a young Joe Louis or Muhammad Ali fighting on the Lewis-Tyson undercard. But we don't, and it would be a shame to spoil an overripe fruit like Lewis-Tyson worrying about it. And who knows? Maybe Lewis-Tyson will turn out to be so great, we'll want to see it again.

At least that would keep things going while we wait for a genuine messiah to come along. He has to be out there somewhere. There has to be at least one more. There always has been before. It's just not time quite yet; the wheel still hasn't come full circle. But it will, and then, if we're lucky, a fighter will materialize who will take our breath away, and maybe, just maybe, make us forget all about Lewis, Tyson, and all the other 20th century leftovers.

In the meantime, Tyson-Lewis isn't a bad diversion. It's just important to keep in mind that it's only an echo of the past, not the heralding of the future. We're going to have to wait a bit longer for that.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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ROUND ONE

ALI: THUMBLESS GLOVES UP

Will Smith initially balked at the daunting task of playing Muhammad Ali in Michael Mann's biopic, *Ali*, covering the most turbulent and successful years of The Greatest's life and career. Thankfully, Smith changed his mind, and he went on to turn in a tremendous performance in this highly entertaining film, portraying the legendary champ better than Ali himself did in the 1977 flick *The Greatest*.

Smith completely transformed into Ali, from his slow Southern Baptist syntax, to his facial expressions, to the way Ali moved in the ring.

Just as impressive is the way Mann brings the audience into the ring with Ali, as he faces the likes of Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, and George Foreman. The excellent fight scenes introduce young fans to Ali's incredible hand and foot speed, but they also give viewers a sense of what it was like for Ali to get hit by these greats and how much sacrifice and physical punishment he endured to reach the top.

PHOTO BY FRANK CONNOR

Smith tackled the task of bringing Ali to the big screen

The supporting cast also shines. Though actor Jon Voight looks nothing like Howard Cosell, he sounds an awful lot like him, and his exchanges with Smith are reminiscent of the playful banter that would go on between Ali and the deceased TV legend. It is Jamie Foxx, however, who comes out the real champ in *Ali*, playing friend and motivator Drew "Bundini" Brown. Foxx gives a masterful performance that should merit Best Supporting Actor attention come Oscar time.

Mann keeps a keen eye on authenticity, especially with his attention to detail in the fight sequences. As Ali punishes Foreman in their memorable eighth round, Mann slows the action as Smith flawlessly recreates the punches Ali landed to defeat the seemingly indestructible champion.

But if boxing fans are looking for revelations about Ali in Mann's film, there are none. Regardless of what the advertisements suggest with the line "Forget what you think you know," for those remotely familiar with Ali's story, the movie does not add any new wrinkles.

Not developing Ali's rivalry with Frazier—the best rivalry in boxing history, possibly in all of sports—is perhaps the greatest area in which the movie is lacking. There is one superficial interaction between the two, when Frazier, played by James Toney, picks up the exiled Ali in his car and offers him money, but their classic first fight is given far less play than Ali's fights with Liston and Foreman.

Toney and the other fighters, Michael Bentt as Liston, Al Cole as Ernie Terrell, and Charles Shufford as Foreman, all do fine jobs pounding away on the former "Fresh Prince." Bentt is particularly good, and Toney does well as Frazier—though the former middleweight and super middleweight titlist is, incredibly, a bit too plump to play "Smokin' Joe." By contrast, Smith got into tremendous physical shape for the title role, and was mentally equipped as well to pull off an admirable acting feat.

—Joe Santoliquito

JAY EDSON, 1924-2001

Edson: Popular former ref and site coordinator dies at 77

Jay Edson, 77, who refereed 49 world title fights and later defined the role of a boxing site coordinator, died on December 10 after a two-month battle with pancreatic cancer.

Edson was hired by Top Rank president Bob Arum in 1979 in an effort to curb expenditures, but despite having to say no to fighters frequently, they all still loved him.

"When meeting Jay, the first thing you ask yourself is, 'How did a nice guy like this get into a messy business like boxing?'" said George Foreman. "When you get to know Jay, the answer becomes clear: He loved the sport, and no one living knew more about it."

Legendary trainer Angelo Dundee said Edson never had a bad word to say about anybody and that Ray Leonard was always comforted to have Edson working his camp, knowing Edson would make sure all details were covered.

"There aren't a lot of people like Jay Edson left in this world, and that's not a good thing," Dundee said. "Jay was a special guy. He always had a smile and a good word, and he always did what he believed was right."

Edson refereed many high profile bouts, including a '71 battle between Muhammad Ali and Jimmy Ellis, but the biggest one was the one that got away. He was chosen to referee the '75 "Thrilla In Manila" between Ali and Joe Frazier. However, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos wanted a Filipino to referee the bout, and Edson was scratched in favor of Carlos Padilla. But Edson, who also served on the Hawaii and Arizona athletic commissions, never complained.

"The remarkable thing about Jay was how tough he was, but he was universally liked," Arum said. "He had to be tough in his position, and he was, but he was loved by everybody. Some guys are pushovers and accommodating and are liked, but Jay was not like that. He had a job to do, and sometimes he would have to put his foot down and say no, but from the guys at the top of the card to the bottom, he was loved."

Edson, who is survived by his wife, Georgia, was cremated. Georgia Edson asked that donations be made in his name to the American Cancer Society.

—Kevin Iole

MORALES-BARRERA 1½

The televised prefight brawl inched closer to status as a full-fledged big-fight tradition on December 11, when the normally mild-mannered Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales let their fists fly at a Houston press conference hyping their much-anticipated March 2002 rematch. While the affair didn't get quite as rowdy as the Lennox Lewis-Hasim Rahman studio melee four months earlier, it was every bit as shocking because of the fine reputations of the fighters involved.

The two Mexican featherweights were exchanging unfriendly words when, without warning, Barrera fired off a quick right hand to Morales' cheek. Immediately, promotional types in suits jumped in to separate the fighters, helping prevent Morales' retaliatory combination (and an accompanying kick) from landing.

"I hate the guy," said Barrera in explaining why he attacked the man who defeated him via highly controversial decision in 2000's Fight of the Year. Morales isn't exactly spilling over with affection for Barrera, either, saying of the fracas, "He fought like he always does—throws a punch and runs away."

Morales and Barrera showed the same fire at the press conference as they did in their first fight

Naturally, some suggested the brawl was staged to generate attention, but the punches looked as real as any thrown in their first fight. If it was a publicity stunt, though, it's looking like a successful one, as ticket sales for the rematch at the MGM Grand reportedly spiked upward following the scuffle, which was broadcast on sports newscasts across the country.

Unfortunately, there is no tape of what was reported to have happened later that day, when Barrera and Morales allegedly nearly went at it again at the airport. When the tour made its way to El Paso and San Antonio, promoter Bob Arum wisely kept the fighters separate at all times.

Thankfully, there will be nobody telling them not to hit each other on March 2, and from the looks of things, another all-offense war is much more likely than any sort of cautious boxing match.

—Eric Raskin

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
12-7-01	Santiago Samaniego KO 4 Hector Quiroz	ESPN2	jm	C+	B	B+
Anyone else notice that Samaniego looks more like Esteban DeJesus than he does Roberto Duran?						
12-7-01	Bridgett Riley Tech. Win 5 Yolanda Gonzalez	ESPN2	b	D	B+	C
Gonzalez should have won this, but apparently lost precious points in the swimsuit competition						
12-7-01	John Michael Johnson KO 1 Augie Sanchez	ESPN2	f	B	B+	B
Who knew Sanchez had narcolepsy?						
12-13-01	Kassim Ouma KO 4 Pedro Ortega	ESPN	jm	B-	C-	C
Ouma ready for tougher competition; Ortega overwhelmed from the first bell						
12-13-01	Demetrius Hopkins W 6 Ike Ezeji	ESPN	jw	C-	C	C+
Hopkins gets off floor to pound out solid win over gritty Ezeji						
12-13-01	Ray Oliveira D 10 Omar Weis	ESPN	w	B-	A	B-
We might have given this one to Weis, but Oliveira's jab and late comeback made it close						
12-14-01	Robert Wiggins KO 10 Eric Kirkland	ESPN2	h	C	C+	B+
It's always fun when a pot-belly beats a body-beautiful, especially when it's an upset						
12-14-01	Carl Johanneson W 6 Angel Rios	ESPN2	l	C-	B+	B
Johanneson's nonstop offense too much for Rios in quality matchup of prospects						
12-14-01	Eric Harding KO 7 George Jones	ESPN2	lh	B+	B-	B
Harding, who looks better every time out, too much too soon for Jones						
12-15-01	Steve Murray KO 4 Jason Hall	Show	l	C	B+	C
We don't know if Murray has a right hand, but he didn't need it here; Hall way tough but outgunned						
12-15-01	Ricky Hatton KO 2 Justin Rowsell	Show	jw	B-	C-	B-
Let's not get crazy about Hatton; there are lots of good 140-pounders he hasn't fought yet						
12-15-01	**Tim Austin W 12 Ratanachai Vorapin**	**HBO**	**IBF b**	**A**	**C+**	**C+**
Austin turns in another quiet, workmanlike performance, but is a big fight ever going to come?						
12-15-01	**John Ruiz D 12 Evander Holyfield**	**HBO**	**WBA h**	**B+**	**B**	**D**
Maybe Holyfield should have gotten the decision, but who cares? Just be happy it's over						
12-22-01	Derrick Harmon W 12 Demetrius Jenkins	ESPN2	lh	C+	B-	C
Do you think Harmon and Harding and the rest of these guys want to push Roy Jones down a flight of stairs already?						
12-22-01	Miguel Espino KO 4 Ishwar Amador	ESPN2	m	C-	B-	B
Espino a fine boxer, but he stands still and fights when he gets ticked; bad for him, good for us						
12-22-01	Antwun Echols W Disq. 5 Lawrence Chapman	ESPN2	sm	B	C-	C-
Hats off to referee Dr. James Jen Kin, who made all the right calls						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

MOREL DILEMMA

In the ring, at least, hardly anyone laid a hand on WBA flyweight titlist Eric Morel in the year 2001. Outside the ropes, though, the undefeated native of Puerto Rico wasn't so lucky. On October 11, and again on November 3, the 112-pound fighter was arrested in his adopted hometown of Madison, Wisconsin, on suspicion of drunk driving; then, in early-December, Morel was taken into custody a third time and charged with resisting arrest after getting into a scuffle with officers when a car in which Morel was a passenger was pulled over for an alleged traffic violation.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Morel (pictured vs. Alberto Ontiveros) has run afoul of the law

The DWI arrests both occurred in the early morning hours, and each time Morel refused a Breathalyzer test. The third arrest occurred just after midnight as an officer wrote a citation for the driver after his vehicle was seen crossing white fog lines on the side of the road. Morel, 26, reportedly exited the car, became belligerent, and was wrestled to the ground and handcuffed.

A few days before Christmas, Morel's trainer, Bob Lynch, blamed the boxer's troubles on "emotional frustration and a real financial frustration" stemming from problems with Top Rank, the promotional outfit that signed former Olympian Morel to a five-year contract in 1996.

According to Lynch, when their contract with Top Rank expired after last August, he notified the promoter that he and Morel would begin shopping around for a new promoter. But then Top Rank invoked a clause in the contract granting them rights to five title defenses (Morel had made three), and threatened legal action if Morel put his belt on the line for another promoter.

The contract calls for Top Rank to pay Morel $90,000 for a fourth title defense, and $100,000 for the fifth. But since last June 5, when Morel knocked out Jose DeJesus Lopez, Top Rank "hasn't been able to put together a financial package" for another defense, according to Lynch, because neither HBO nor Showtime has shown interest in Morel.

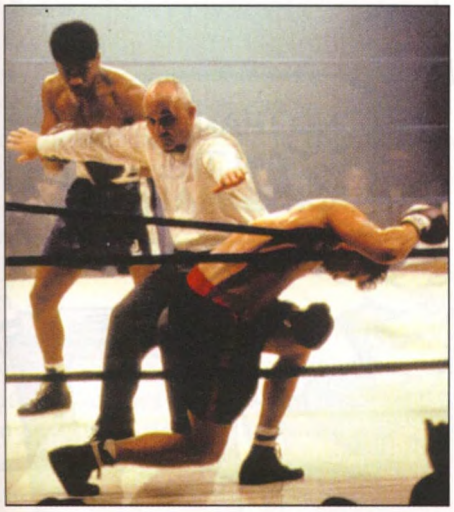
Meanwhile, the trainer said, Morel has "an expensive, champion's lifestyle, and unfortunately he hasn't been able to get championship paydays. He's been spending as though he'd be making $90,000 by this time. He needs the income."

—Pete Ehrmann

MOSTLY MAX

Although Will Smith's *Ali* is on its way to being the largest-grossing boxing motion picture of all-time, not every fight movie can boast such a massive budget and well-known celebrity in the lead role. STARZ! Pictures has contributed to the genre in a more modest manner with a made-for-TV film about the two fights between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling, titled *Joe And Max.*

For those unfamiliar with this pair of former heavyweight champions and/or the historical and political implications of their bouts, *Joe And Max,* directed by Steve James (*Hoop Dreams*), is an entertaining and helpful primer. But for hardcore fight fans there is little new here, just a retelling of one of the game's best-known tales.



The action in **Joe And Max** *had an authentic feel*

The title roles are played by relative unknowns Til Schweiger (Max) and Leonard Roberts (Joe). Both are competent, but neither will make us forget DeNiro as LaMotta or Newman as Graziano. The rest of the cast is unremarkable, although Peta Wilson (TV's *La Femme Nikita*) and Siena Goines as the fighters' love interests sure won't be mistaken for the spit bucket anytime soon. And Rolf Kanies is an appropriately creepy Hitler.

Except for a few minor details—a cornerman using an Enswell on Louis' face in 1936, when the device wasn't used until the '70s—the film is well-researched and pays great attention to period detail. The fight scenes are also authentic looking.

Although *Joe And Max* attempts to explore the relationship between the pair, it concentrates much more on Schmeling than Louis, and never delves deeply enough into the psyches of either man for viewers to understand what made them tick.

Joe And Max will premiere March 9 on the pay television service STARZ!

—Nigel Collins

OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Judah: Gets a moderate slap on the wrist

Former fighter **Mitchell Rose**, best known for knocking out **Butterbean** in 1995, is in the news again after filing a complaint charging that **Mike Tyson** assaulted him outside a Brooklyn nightclub in mid-December. According to the police report, Rose approached Tyson inside the Sugar Hill nightclub, and Tyson's security guards asked Rose to leave. Rose did, waited outside, and then began cursing and screaming at Tyson when "Iron Mike" left the club. According to Rose, Tyson then grabbed his mink coat, punched him, and knocked him down. Tyson's people insist he merely chastised Rose and left. The investigation was ongoing as of press time ... Undisputed middleweight champion **Bernard Hopkins** and adviser **Lou DiBella** parted ways in December, and their feud became very public when Hopkins told the press that he paid DiBella $50,000 to appear on HBO in May '00, back when DiBella was HBO Sports senior vice president. DiBella responded by filing an $11-million lawsuit against Hopkins in New York District Court in late-December, seeking damages for libel and breach of contract ... The Nevada State Athletic Commission handed down their punishment on **Zab Judah** in late-November for his violent behavior following his November 3 fight with **Kostya Tszyu**. Judah got a six-month suspension and a $75,000 fine ... **Oscar De La Hoya** made some big business moves in mid-December, launching his own promotional company, Golden Boy Promotions, and acquiring the California-based **Roy Englebrecht** Promotions. GBP immediately secured the roughly 30 fight dates Englebrecht had scheduled for 2002. Englebrecht has been named the CEO of the new company, while De La Hoya is the president ... Former super middleweight titlist **Graciano Rocchigiani**, no stranger to scuffles with the law, was taken into police custody in his native Germany in mid-December after an early-morning scrap with nine policemen. Police said they found Rocchigiani passed out drunk in a car, and when they tried to wake him, he responded with a series of wild blows, injuring one officer ... Former USA Boxing president **Jerry Dusenberry** pleaded innocent in early-December to charges he sexually molested an eight-year-old boy ... Reputed Russian mafiosos **Alexander Nosov** and **Vasiliy Ermichine** were convicted in mid-December of racketeering, kidnapping, and murder in the 1995 death of former cruiserweight contender **Sergei Kobozev** ... We reported last issue that the WBC was looking into safety regulations in Indonesia because of the rash of recent ring deaths there (five in the last two years), and in mid-December, they announced they were suspending the country from their organization. Whether this will eventually lead to improved safety practices or will simply lead to fights taking place there without the sanctioning of the WBC is anybody's guess at this point ... French junior middleweight **Olivier Meunier** committed suicide in early-December at the age of 29. Meunier, a former national titleholder in France, had a career record of 29-11-1 (4) ... Our best wishes go out to **Ferdie Pacheco**, who suffered a stroke late in the year. "The Fight Doctor" was reportedly recovering as we went to press, and was hoping to be well enough to return to the public eye by next spring ... Our prayers also go out to Texas clubfighter **Dyirell Crayton**, who was listed in critical condition after being knocked out in the final round of a six-rounder by prospect **Stefan Pryor** in Tulsa, Okahoma, in mid-December.

Pacheco: Recovering from a stroke

THE PUNCHLINES

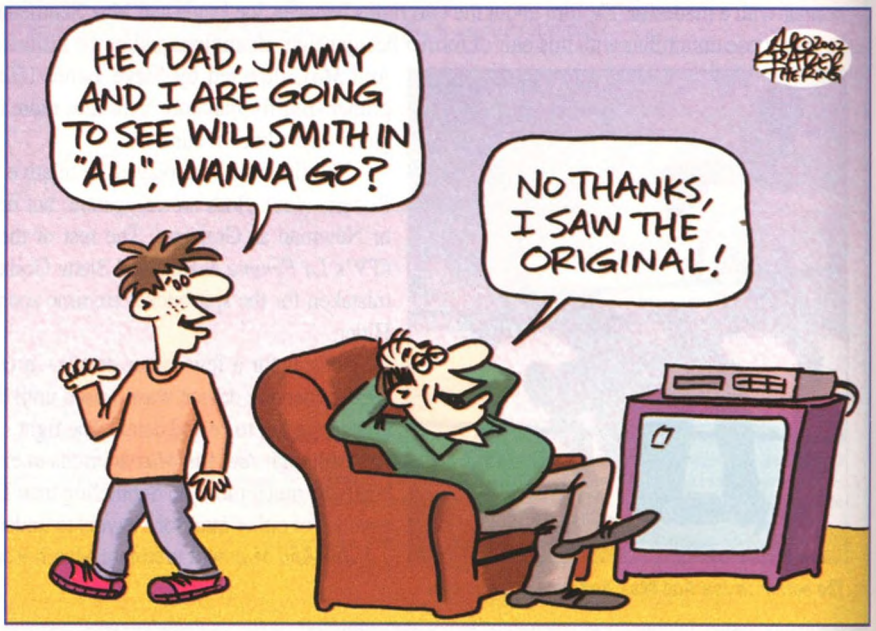
"Keep taking those acting lessons, Lennox, because your next role will be playing Cinderella, and I am gonna break your little glass chin."

—Mike Tyson, on his proposed April 6 fight with Lewis

"Who's he going to fight, that Mama guy? And if he does, he'll probably get beat."

—Oscar De La Hoya, referring to Fernando Vargas turning down a $5-million offer to fight him, and instead possibly facing mandatory challenger Mamadou Thiam

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended January 1, 2002)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Welterweight
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Middleweight
3. **ROY JONES**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Featherweight
5. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Lightweight
6. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Middleweight
7. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Junior Middleweight
8. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Junior Flyweight
9. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **ERIK MORALES**
    Featherweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: The disappointing third match between John Ruiz and Evander Holyfield, which resulted in an unpopular draw, raises Holyfield (who most observers felt deserved the decision) from seventh to sixth, while Ruiz falls from fifth to seventh. This minor reshuffling also allows Kirk Johnson (sixth last issue) to move up to the fifth spot.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Even though Bruno Girard (seventh last issue) won an alphabet title, his opponent was unranked journeyman Robert Koon, and, therefore, Girard does not advance from his previous rating.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes this issue, but if the proposed bout between Oscar De La Hoya (currently number one) and Fernando Vargas (currently number two) takes place, THE RING, in accordance with its new championship policy, will recognize the winner as the true 154-pound world champion.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Inactive James Page (10th last issue) departs, and is replaced by Cory Spinks.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: After fighting a controversial draw with Omar Weis at welterweight, Ray Oliveira (10th last issue) exits the 140-pound ranks. Oliveira will campaign as a full-fledged welterweight from now on. Debuting in Oliveira's old position is undefeated British slugger Ricky Hatton.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Providing it comes off as scheduled, the showdown between second-ranked Joel Casamayor and third-ranked Acelino Freitas should be history by the time you read this. Hopefully, the winner will next go after top-ranked Floyd Mayweather (providing he's willing to stay at 130 pounds), making it possible for another world champion to be crowned.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: The vacancy at the top of the 126-pound class should be filled on March 2, when number-one ranked Marco Antonio Barrera meets second-ranked Erik Morales in their much-anticipated rematch. The winner will receive a RING belt and recognition as the world featherweight champion.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Jose Luis Valbuena (10th last issue) drops out due to inactivity, which makes room for Israel Vazquez to debut in Valbuena's former spot. Another vacancy should be filled shortly after this issue goes on sale, when number-one rated Bones Adams and number-two rated Paulie Ayala will clash for a second time. THE RING will recognize the victor as the world junior featherweight champion.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended January 1, 2002

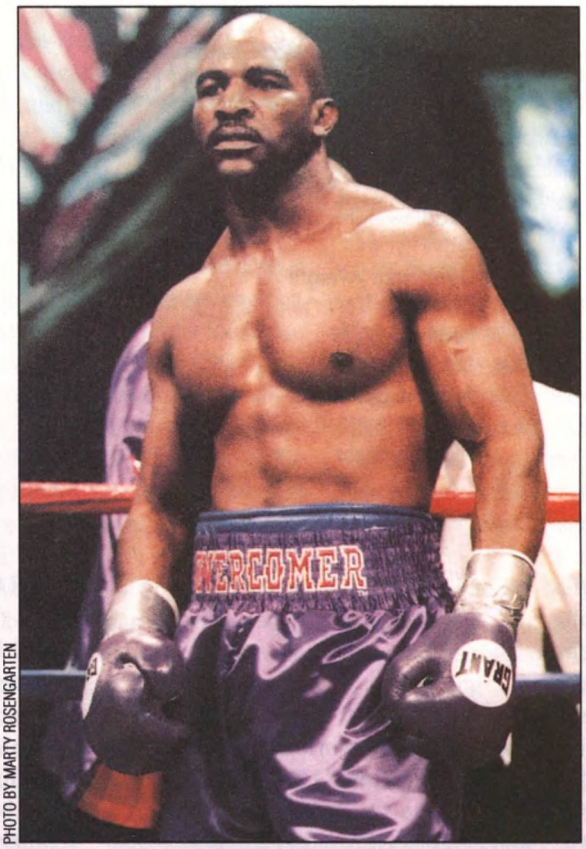


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Evander Holyfield inched up a spot at heavyweight with his latest performance against John Ruiz

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Champions can be crowned in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number one- and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number one- and number-three contenders.

The only two occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status is when he either retires or moves to another weight division.

Ratings By The Editors
Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: LENNOX LEWIS
England 39-2-1

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 37-1
2. **MIKE TYSON**
Catskill, NY 49-3
3. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 34-2
4. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 35-3
5. **KIRK JOHNSON**
Canada 32-0-1
6. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
Fairburn, GA 37-5-2
7. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 37-4-1
8. **JAMEEL McCLINE**
Port Jefferson, NY 27-2-3
9. **FRES OQUENDO**
Puerto Rico 22-0
10. **DAVID TUA**
New Zealand 39-3

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
Whittier, CA 34-2
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 22-1
3. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 42-3
4. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO**
Spain 51-5
5. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 45-3
6. **YORY BOY CAMPAS**
Mexico 79-4
7. **ALEX BUNEMA**
Dallas, TX 19-3-1
8. **J.C. CANDELO**
Denver, CO 23-3-3
9. **ROMAN KARMAZIN**
Russia 28-0-1
10. **STEVE ROBERTS**
England 27-0

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 54-3
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 41-0
3. **NASEEM HAMED**
England 35-1
4. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
Albuquerque, NM 50-2-2
5. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 38-5
6. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 60-11
7. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 37-2
8. **FRANKIE TOLEDO**
Paterson, NJ 40-6-1
9. **MBULELO BOTILE**
South Africa 27-2
10. **WILLIAM ABELYAN**
Las Vegas, NV 17-4-1

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **BONES ADAMS**
Henderson, KY 41-4-3
2. **PAULIE AYALA**
Ft. Worth, TX 33-1
3. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 33-2-1
4. **WILLIE JORRIN**
Sacramento, CA 28-0
5. **LEHLO LEDWABA**
South Africa 33-2-1
6. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 42-3-1
7. **MICHAEL BRODIE**
England 32-1
8. **YOBER ORTEGA**
Venezuela 32-3-1
9. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
Mexico 29-2-2
10. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 31-2

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TIM AUSTIN**
Cincinnati, OH 24-0-1
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 34-1-1
3. **EIDY MOYA**
Venezuela 15-1
4. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 26-3
5. **MARK JOHNSON**
Washington, D.C. 40-2
6. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 51-2
7. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ**
Panama 19-3-1
8. **ADAN VARGAS**
Mexico 36-3-1
9. **HERIBERTO RUIZ**
Mexico 23-1-1
10. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 24-3

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany 34-0
2. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 30-0
3. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 47-3
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 41-12-1
5. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 17-0
6. **EZRA SELLERS**
   Washington, D.C. 24-4
7. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 17-1
8. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina 32-4-1
9. **ALEXANDRE GUROV**
   Ukraine 29-3-1
10. **JORGE CASTRO**
    Argentina 120-7-3

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES
Pensacola, FL 45-1

1. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 45-0
2. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA 21-1-1
3. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX 42-6-1
4. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 41-3
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 18-1
6. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 27-1
7. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France 40-2-2
8. **LOU DEL VALLE**
   Bronx, NY 31-2-1
9. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 40-1
10. **DERRICK HARMON**
    Chicago, IL 21-2

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 25-0
2. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 32-0
3. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 24-1-1
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 26-4-1
5. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 37-8
6. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX 41-6
7. **ERIC LUCAS**
   Canada 34-4-3
8. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 38-1
9. **MANUEL SIACA**
   Puerto Rico 15-4
10. **MARKUS BEYER**
    Germany 23-1

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 40-2-1

1. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico 40-1
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 33-2-1
3. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 32-1
4. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden 26-0
5. **HARRY SIMON**
   Namibia 22-0
6. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. 35-3
7. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France 32-5-1
8. **CARL DANIELS**
   St. Louis, MO 47-3-1
9. **ANTONIO PERUGINO**
   Italy 18-0
10. **TITO MENDOZA**
    Panama 25-3

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 38-0
2. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana 21-0-1
3. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA 33-0
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 26-0
5. **DANIEL SANTOS**
   Puerto Rico 24-2-1
6. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 37-3
7. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 25-3
8. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 22-10
9. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO**
   Italy 36-1-1
10. **CORY SPINKS**
    St. Louis, MO 29-1

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 28-1-1

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 47-3
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 27-1
3. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 26-1-1
4. **ENER JULIO**
   Colombia 21-3
5. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL 24-1
6. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA 37-10
7. **BEN TACKIE**
   Ghana 23-2
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
   Germany 28-1
9. **TERRONN MILLETT**
   St. Louis, MO 26-2-1
10. **RICKY HATTON**
    England 27-0

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico 44-4-1
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 33-2-1
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA 34-0
4. **RAUL BALBI**
   France 49-4-1
5. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN 39-5-1
6. **JULIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 23-1
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 33-0
8. **COLIN DUNNE**
   England 35-1
9. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX 42-5-2
10. **JUAN LAZCANO**
    El Paso, TX 28-2-1

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 27-0
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 26-0
3. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 30-0
4. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 35-2
5. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV 20-1
6. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea 22-1-1
7. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia 14-2-1
8. **PHILLIP NDOU**
   South Africa 25-1
9. **JOHN BROWN**
   Atlantic City, NJ 23-9
10. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ**
    Mexico 48-4-1

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 25-2-1
2. **CELES KOBAYASHI**
   Japan 24-4-3
3. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 21-3-1
4. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines 43-4-2
5. **SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand 41-0
6. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela 34-9-3
7. **PEDRO ALCAZAR**
   Panama 22-1-1
8. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea 18-2
9. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia 27-3
10. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
    Mexico 21-0

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 30-0
2. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 42-2
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 26-0
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa 19-1
5. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 47-3
6. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 23-0-1
7. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand 24-1
8. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand 39-1
9. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines 11-1-2
10. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
    Venezuela 17-0

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico 50-0-1
2. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 23-1
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 24-1
4. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 29-2-1
5. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 26-1
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 21-2-1
7. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 27-3-1
8. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
   Japan 23-1
9. **ZOLANI PETELO**
   South Africa 17-3-2
10. **BABY JAKE MATLALA**
    South Africa 51-12-2

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 26-1-1
2. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico 18-0-1
3. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 45-2-2
4. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan 21-7
5. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines 31-6-1
6. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 14-2-1
7. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand 28-4
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 33-2
9. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 25-1
10. **MIGUEL BARRERA**
    Colombia 20-0-2

NEW FACES

DaVARRYL WILLIAMSON

Heavyweight

By Joe Santoliquito

DaVarryl Williamson didn't like the noise that surrounded him in Southeast Washington, D.C. He didn't like what he saw. He was frustrated by the constant chaos at home, by the mad scramble everyone seemed to be locked into, looking for their fix, whether it was drugs, a get-rich-quick scheme, or venting displaced anger.

Williamson would drift off and imagine something better, a more stable, tranquil environment. The last places Williamson thought he'd find refuge were the ring and the classroom.

The 33-year-old heavyweight possesses a rare combination of boxing skills and academic achievements. He has a master's degree in administrative services, serious power in both hands, a 12-1 (11) record, and a peaceful happy home, with his wife and two children.

The only restlessness presently stirring in Williamson's life is his determination to win a heavyweight title.

"My family admires what I've done with myself," said Williamson, the first college graduate in his family. "Right now, I'm the family favorite, but there was a time when I was most likely to be dead by the time I was 18. I didn't have too many positive examples around me, and there wasn't too much positive encouragement in my immediate household. You sit in a room and turn out the lights and you think about the things you've been through. It helps."

At 33, the 6'4", 210-pound Williamson is on a speedpass toward success. He has a promotional contract with Cedric Kushner, plus an extensive amateur background that included 138 fights, 103 of which he won by knockout. He came close to an Olympic berth in 1996, losing to Nate Jones but making the U.S. team as an alternate, and again in 2000, losing to Michael Bennett in the heavyweight finals.

(Continued on page 84)

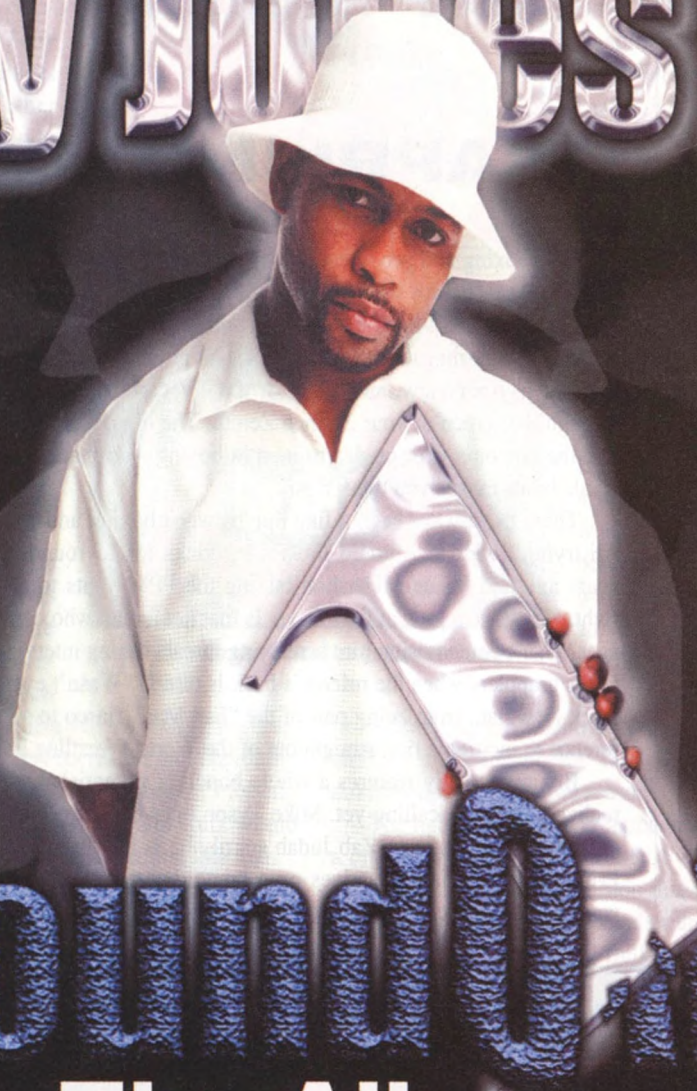
PRO RECORD

2000		
June 30	Paul Dowdy, Denver, CO	KO 1
Aug. 4	Gregory Dial, Las Vegas	KO 2
Aug. 24	Ron Smith, Worley, ID	KO 2
Oct. 6	Willie Chapman, Las Vegas	KO by 4
2001		
Jan. 21	Johnny Lewis, Blackhawk, CO	KO 1
March 18	Brad Rone, Denver	W 4
May 25	Leroy Berbick, Norfolk, VA	KO 2
July 6	Antonio Colbert, Reno, NV	KO 1
July 21	Marvin Hunt, Las Vegas	KO 1
Aug. 4	Antuan Shazell, New York City	KO 1
Aug. 25	Deric Ryals, Laughlin, NV	KO 3
Nov. 16	Andre Kopilov, Las Vegas	KO 3
Nov. 30	Harold Sconiers, Reno	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
13	12	1	0	11

Body Head Entertainment Presents

Roy Jones Jr.



Round One

The Album

Featuring:
Dave Hollister(Dreamworks), Hahz The Rippa, Johnny Augustus,
KevilVageda, Katrina Washington,
Ms. Diamond, Mystikal(Jive),
Perion, Scarface(Rap-A-Lot Records)
"2-4" of the SNYPAZ (Rap-A-Lot Records)
With Production by:
Mr. Lee, Carlos Broady,
Perion aka"Lumbajack", Timmy Fingerz, Fury, and Hahz The Rippa

IN STORES JANUARY 29, 2002

THE BODY HEAD ENTERTAINMENT

EMI

www.bodyhead.com www.royjonesjr.com

Layout and graphic design by: Jerome " Big Perion " Hunter

Contact Info: Body Head Entertainment Studios (850) 479-2918 Fax (850) 479-2986

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

GRAPPLING HOOK

Pro boxing and pro wrestling have much more in common than just a roped-off playing field and ex-champs who call themselves "The Rock." In both sports, chaos is the norm, political incorrectness rules, titles get passed around like a flask on a hunting trip, the top promoter is an insufferable megalomaniac, it's easy to predict who's going to win, the big events are shown only on pay-per-view, and some of the TV commentary makes you want to launch a shot-put through the screen of your 25-inch Zenith. The big difference between the two sports, of course, is that the outcome isn't predetermined in boxing—no matter how much the scoring of some Paulie Ayala bouts makes you think it is.

There has always been a fine line between boxing and wrestling, as evidenced by Muhammad Ali trying to dodge Antonio Inoki's leg kicks for 15 rounds one forgettable summer night many years ago and Vince McMahon buying the PPV rights to the Sugar Ray Leonard-Don Lalonde fight. Hey, take a look at Lou Duva. Is that not a man who could have easily been a wrestling manager? Can't you envision him screaming threats during interviews, and then passing foreign objects to his grapplers when the referee's back is turned? Wasn't everything involving Riddick Bowe and Rock Newman, from being part of the "Fan Man" fiasco to sucker punching a rival at a press conference to inciting a riot, straight out of the World Wrestling Federation playbook?

Boxing actually features a whole bunch of potential wrestling sensations that simply haven't realized their true calling yet. Mike Tyson bites ears, wrenches arms, and keeps hitting opponents after the contest is over. Zab Judah angrily hurls his ring stool and grabs the ref around the throat. Prince Naseem Hamed arrives on a "magic carpet" suspended by cables. Hector Camacho Sr. wages war while clad in a loincloth. Lennox Lewis and Hasim Rahman diss each other with tasteless sexual references and brawl on the floor of a TV studio. Geez, the WWF could sign these guys tomorrow.

PHOTO BY VERN VERNA

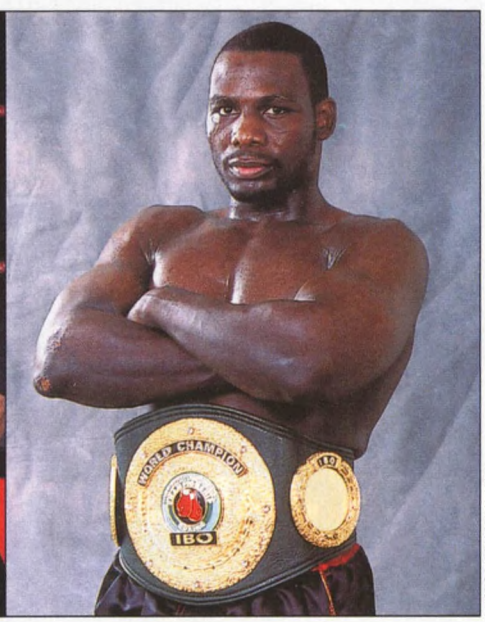


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Both wrestling and boxing have a "Rock"

With its silly shtick, bitter feuds, tireless trash talk, political treachery, and soap opera plot twists, boxing seems to have stolen many of its personality traits from its fellow black sheep of sports. If the Sweet Science was really smart, however, it would lift a few more. For instance ...

•Creating a new identity: Wrestling doesn't even call itself wrestling anymore because it feels the word reminds too many people of those days when a sixtysomething Bobo Brazil squeezed himself into a Speedo and a flabby Chief Jay Strongbow whooped his way

around the ring, unable to execute any move more complicated than a Tomahawk Chop to some bad guy's solar plexus. These days, grappling prefers to be known as, get this, Sports Entertainment.

The Sweet Science ought to follow suit. Think about it. The word "boxing" still evokes images of Archie Moore competing at the age of 49 and tubby Tony Tubbs outpointing portly Greg Page. Boxing? That's something your father used to watch. This generation tunes in to ESPN2 on Friday nights to watch Pugilistic Performance Art.

And speaking of changing names, how about ...

•Making better use of nicknames: The Rock. The Undertaker. The Hurricane. The only time some wrestlers use their real names is when they're filling out a deposit slip at the bank. The fight game has so many great nicknames that it, too, ought to start promoting its stars less as people and more as characters.

Bernard Hopkins vs. Oscar De La Hoya, after all, doesn't sound nearly as exciting as The Executioner vs. The Golden Boy. Johnny Tapia should henceforth be known only as Vida Loca. Tyson as Iron, Shane Mosley as Sugar, Laila Ali as The Daughter, Evander Holyfield as Real Deal or The Procreator, etc. Naturally, bad nicknames would have to be replaced. Quiet Man isn't exactly a ticket seller when it appears on a poster, so John Ruiz would have to become The New England Patriot or something like that.

Using only nicknames sure would make things easier on the boxing press when reporting on the lighter weight classes. A feature on an upcoming Pichit C. Siriwat-Saman Sorjaturong clash might not send the proofreader's blood pressure into the stratosphere if it was The Thai Typhoon meeting The Bangkok Banger. Nicknames would also do wonders for guys like Lewis, who don't really have any nicknames that stick. Wrestling has its Triple H, and after Lewis signs for a showdown with Tyson, the Briton can start calling himself Triple $.

•Involving promoters in the action: Vince McMahon used to be the WWF's owner, puppeteer, and occasional broadcaster. Now, he's Mr. McMahon, a wrestling character who gets whacked in the head with chairs, kicked in the groin, and is involved in more juicy plot lines than the entire cast of *General Hospital*.

Boxing sure could spice things up if an unhappy and underpaid fighter occasionally drilled his promoter with an uppercut during the postfight mob scene in the ring. (Remember how loudly the theater audience cheered when Rocky Balboa laid out that Don King look-alike at the end of *Rocky V*?) Just imagine some frustrated titlist telling Larry Merchant during the postfight interview, "He cut my purse 20 percent for training expenses, and now I'm gonna cut him with a headbutt to the eyebrow!"

Teh-heh. Only in America.

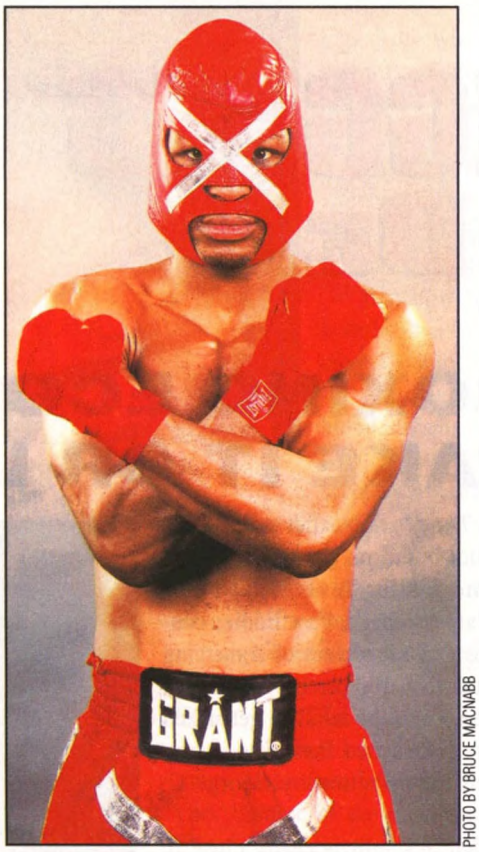


PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

Are you sure that's Hopkins behind the mask?

•Getting maniacal: WrestleMania has been a hit since 1985 because the concept is great—a super event that settles long-running feuds and is packed full of can't-miss matchups. BoxingMania could be a smash sensation, too.

The first installment, held at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, could feature Lewis-Tyson, Hopkins-Roy Jones II, De La Hoya-Fernando Vargas, Christy Martin-Lucia Rijker, and King-Bob Arum. Okay, so it may cost $349.95 on pay-per-view. But it only comes along once a year. Call your cable operator today!

•Utilizing masks and makeup: Wouldn't it be fun to one day discover that the masked number three super middleweight contender from parts unknown is actually Ray Charles Leonard embarked on yet another comeback? As for the makeup, well, it looks pretty good on The Hurricane, and you can just imagine how neat a Hopkins, Tyson, or Kostya Tszyu would look in war paint. It might be put to best use, however, in the women's game, where some of the, shall we say, less attractive gals might be encouraged to try a new look. Heck, it would probably be the first makeup some of them have ever worn.

•Rewriting the rulebook: One of wrestling's best rules is the one that states a champion can lose his crown only by pin or submission, not for any other reason.

The fight game needs to immediately implement a rule that says a champion can't be dethroned by a gash, a low blow that incapacitates him, or any decision that a) causes a distraught Harold Lederman's voice to go up another three octaves or, b) inspires the crowd to chant, "Bull-s___! Bull-s___!" for more than 45 seconds.

•Bringing on the dancing girls: Wrestling once served up the Nitro Girls to entertain and titillate between bouts. Boxing can employ the Enswell Sweeties.

•Simplifying the alphabet: Wrestling once had so many organizations that it made boxing seem apolitical. But now that the WWF has either bought out or run out all of its competition, life in the squared circle is so much less complicated. Any chance Mr. McMahon wants to take over the IBF?

•Creating specialty matches: Lewis vs. Tyson in a steel cage, with Max Kellerman as guest referee. L.A. rivals Mosley vs. De La Hoya in a loser-leaves-town match. Wladimir Klitschko vs. Vitali Klitschko in a loser-leaves-family match. Laila Ali vs. Jacqui Frazier-Lyde in a loser-drops-her-surname match. HBO's Ross Greenburg vs. Showtime's Jay Larkin in a winner-lands-Tyson-vs.-Lewis match. Or, in a special installment of HBO's *Pugilistic Performance Art After Dark*, Ruiz-Holyfield IV, with the stipulation that it ain't over 'til somebody gets knocked out.

Here's hoping that we all get to bed before two o'clock the following afternoon. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

BOXING ECONOMICS: TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

In *The Hustler*, that great 1961 film based on the novel by the late Walter Tevis, Paul Newman's pool shark, Fast Eddie, concludes that 25 percent of something is better than 100 percent of nothing. So he accepts the terms to get staked by the coldhearted Bert, who is portrayed to perfection by George C. Scott.

That 3-1 split is eerily close to Oscar De La Hoya's offer to Fernando Vargas—a purse of $5-million versus $14-million for "The Golden Boy." Take it or leave it, as Bert told Fast Eddie. At press time, Vargas was leaving it. It's easy to see why. "Ferocious Fernando" has too much pride to get beat up by De La Hoya before they even get in the ring.

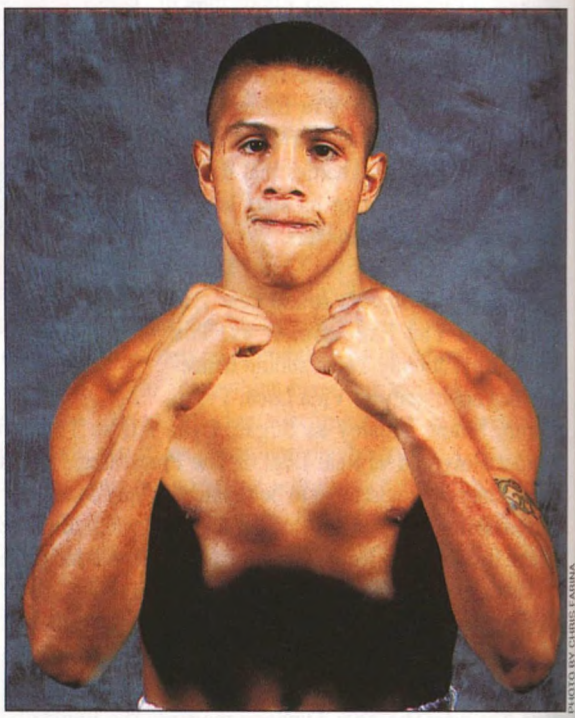


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Will Vargas come up empty handed?

But where else can Vargas make $5-million? Most likely not from Shane Mosley. Mosley has enough trouble digging up a $5-million purse for himself. Such are the realities of boxing economics. Talent helps, but talent alone won't fill seats and attract 40 or 50 bucks apiece from pay-per-view customers.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Arum was always the brain behind Oscar

Just how did De La Hoya become such a great attraction? Talent plus good looks helped. But there was also plenty of astute marketing by promoter Bob Arum. Former *Los Angeles Times* boxing writer Tim Kawakami, now a columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News*, recently divulged how assiduously and painstakingly Arum courted top editors at the *Times*. The *Times*, with daily circulation around a million, sells its articles for publication in hundreds of other papers through its news service, owned jointly with the *Washington Post*.

Arum would entice *Times* editors to come out to Las Vegas for big fights and dine with De La Hoya, who would then pour out charm like a golden waterfall. I imagine Arum, who has all the magnetism of junk mail, stayed mostly quiet.

Not long after De La Hoya turned pro, the mighty *Times*, seduced

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Out-of control Butler is restrained by referee Mike Ortega

by local boy De La Hoya, seemed unaware other fighters existed. It ignored champions and local boxing shows while devoting endless space to minute details of De La Hoya's life, all the way down to his golf game. Two of those ignored champions were Southern Californians Fernando Vargas and Shane Mosley.

MEMO TO THE RING'S EDITORS: You know *The Ring Annual* Collector's Special that listed the 12 greatest fighters competing today? You left out Ricardo Lopez.

He may not be what he used to be, but he's still the New York Yankees and Los Angeles Lakers of the strawweight division, even though he's now fighting three pounds north at junior flyweight. Meanwhile, you included Prince Naseem Hamed, who only comes out on Groundhog Day.

Anyone who missed the collector's issue should run out and find one. Somehow, even though I had nothing to do with it, it provided a beautifully organized, illustrated, informative rundown of who's who and what's what in boxing today. Not to be missed. As for that list, well, 11 out of 12 ain't bad.

RIGHTEOUS ARREST: Although most boxers are exceptionally nice people, there has always been a small percentage who are your basic psychopaths. I'm talking serious undesirables. The kind of twisted thugs who beat up women and torture cats. Everybody in the fight game runs into these guys once in a while. They make you want to go home and scrub yourself.

At the same time, boxing is the one sport that will pull lost souls from prison gutters and help them build decent lives. Everybody in the business can be proud that boxing gave the decent, standup Bernard Hopkins a second chance in life. You can bet they would never have let him on the tennis circuit.

But when you carve a doorway broad enough for a Hopkins to come through, you run the risk of letting others slither past who make the least of the opportunity. Take sore loser James Butler, for example, who, with an ESPN2 camera right on him, sucker-punched the victorious Richard Grant after the decision.

I can't imagine what they would do to a tennis brat who leaped over the net and slammed his victorious opponent with a right hand in the teeth. But if he did, they should do exactly what the New York commission did—call a cop.

This is serious stuff when the culprit is a trained, 168-pound professional fighter with his wraps on and gloves off. Especially when his victim had removed his mouthpiece and was smiling with his mouth open. You can kill a guy that way.

DAINTY IT WASN'T: There's only one thing in women's boxing worse than all those women who don't know how to fight. It's women who do know how to fight. Because then they can really hurt each other.

Bantamweights Yolanda Gonzalez and Bridgett Riley both know how to fight. Which is why the petite Riley got cut in the third round and again in the fifth.

Watching a banged up young woman competing as blood streams down her face is not my idea of entertainment. Fortunately, the officials stopped the bout after that second cut, caused by a clash of heads.

Should the female gender have the right to compete in a sport that may well scar their faces for life? Of course. But we don't have to like it. We also don't have to like the split decision going to the better-connected Riley, who clearly lost. What were the names of those masked men?

HELL AS A VENUE: Fantasy Springs Casino in Indio, California, which is where Gonzalez got jobbed, remains my least favorite venue. It has the temerity to host fights outdoors in some of the most inhospitable terrain east of Tora Bora. The place freezes in winter and broils in summer, when curious sand flies gambol like tiny elves in and out of everybody's ears and nostrils.

Promoter after greedy promoter sets up cards out there on that desolate, unforgiving strip of sand to pocket what must be one hell of a site fee. TV cameramen then have to bend themselves into pretzels trying not to shoot the seats, which on most occasions are basically empty. It's like setting up a drive-in movie theater on the planet Jupiter. I have one word of advice to the casino: Move.

But there's also a perfectly reasonable second option. Set up indoors with heat, air conditioning, and a serious set of insect screens. ■

PHOTO BY LARA STUART-REBNEY

Riley bleeds all over Gonzalez

BALLROOM BOXING AT MICHAEL'S EIGHTH AVENUE

IF YOU GO

Location: 7220 Grayburn Drive, Glen Burnie, MD 21061; phone: 410-766-7474; Web address: www.ballroomboxing.com

Directions: By car, take the Baltimore Beltway (I-695) south to I-97 south to Baltimore-Annapolis Boulevard (Rt. 648) east to Glen Burnie. At the second light, make a left on Eighth Avenue. Take Eighth Avenue for a little less than a mile. Michael's will be on the left, at the corner of Grayburn and Eighth.

Tickets: Tickets usually go on sale a month before the fights. Call Ballroom Boxing for a schedule of shows. Ticket prices: General admission $25 in advance, $30 at the door; ringside $50.

Who to look out for: Baltimore/ D.C. fighters past and present, such as Vincent Pettway, Sharmba Mitchell, Simon Brown, Teddy Reid, Keith Holmes, and Rahman. Baltimore Orioles and Ravens players also attend, as does homegrown actor Charles S. Dutton. The fighters in the crowd are generally very approachable. You can also spend time with the preliminary boxers, who blend into the crowd to watch the rest of the card after their bouts are completed.

Advice to greenhorns: Michael's is at the entrance to a small industrial park, so there's plenty of parking around the building, if not in the immediate parking lot. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. The fights start at 8:00 p.m.

Oysters fresh from the Chesapeake Bay are available

Text & Photos by Mike Greenhill

Few would argue that New York and Philadelphia are the best fight towns on the East Coast, both from a current and historical perspective. But Baltimore, Maryland, also has a long and rich boxing history. While there is currently no venue in the Baltimore area with the antiquated charm of Philadelphia's Blue Horizon, small club boxing is alive and well thanks to Ballroom Boxing, which holds cards every other month at Michael's Eighth Avenue, a catering hall just 10 minutes south of downtown Baltimore, in the suburb of Glen Burnie, Maryland.

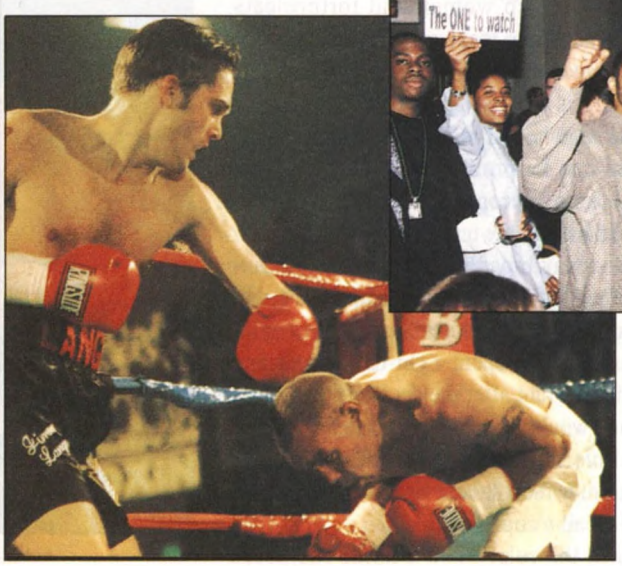
There are no gimmicks at Michael's, just good, solid club boxing. Shows have been held there for the past 15 years, and the room is normally filled to its 1,700 capacity.

Promoter Scott Wagner puts on entertaining, professional events with the help of assistant Dave Wilkerson and matchmaker Chris Middendorf. In fact, most of Ballroom Boxing's staff, from the security guards to the concessionaires, are longtime employees. Combine that with the many fan regulars, and you get a real family atmosphere.

Souvenirs are plentiful, and Dorothy "The Beer Girl" is there to greet you, selling from her tub full of ice-cold brews just after you walk through the front door. Plenty of food and drink is available, including fresh oysters from the Chesapeake. There are even two "Diamond Vision"-sized TV screens at each end of the room, so you can watch replays of knockouts.

"We put the giant screens in four years ago," said Wagner. "That night, Darryl Hollowell went down with such a delayed reaction, nobody could tell if it came from a punch until everyone looked behind them at the replay. The screens were so popular, we've kept them ever since."

Comcast Cablevision, one of the largest cable networks in the country, tele-



Jimmy Lange's fans (above) cheer him on to victory over Alex Perez (left)

Baltimore's Ballroom Boxing usually draws a full house

vises all of the shows on a delayed basis, replaying them a couple of weeks later.

Wagner started promoting in 1995, taking over the reins from Josh Hall, now another of the matchmakers. A fight fan his entire life, Wagner's family owned ballrooms, so he figured he could hold fight cards and have fun while doing it. The key to Wagner's success at Michael's is keeping it simple.

"We do whatever we can to book competitive fights," said Wagner. "We could have some real big names here, but we don't want a name in a mismatch, just to say we had him here at Michael's. The fans here enjoy a good fight no matter who's in the ring, whether it's a veteran or somebody's pro debut."

Wagner has a lot of fighters to choose from. In addition to Baltimore, plenty of pugilists drive the 45 minutes from Washington, D.C., to show their skills at Michael's. And Lou Duva tests his youngsters here, as well. With Hasim Rahman's success, a thriving Maryland boxing scene is on the upswing, and Ballroom Boxing has been an important part of the revival. ■

Promoter Wagner has created a fan-friendly atmosphere

Dorothy "The Beer Girl" does her thing

The Ballroom Boxing venue is easy to spot

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Gee, what happened to that famous Judah smile? Neither former junior welterweight titlist Zab nor his father, Yoel, are looking especially boisterous these days. But then again, this photo was taken at the Holyfield-Ruiz III fight, so maybe that explains why the Judahs look so bored.

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Vinny Paz is always a big draw at Foxwoods, and here he draws promoter Jimmy Burchfield and ring announcer Jimmy Lennon Jr. over for a photo op. No truth to the rumor that Paz' face sprung a leak the moment Lennon said "It's Showtime!" later that evening.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

If his wardrobe is any indication, journeyman Mexican junior flyweight Victor Burgos has been watching a few too many teen slasher flicks lately. Or maybe Burgos just got his American clichés confused and set out to show that he's the "scream" of the crop.

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

The frankest man in boxing poses with the Frankest man in boxing, as undisputed middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins and veteran referee Frank Cappuccino stop to vogue for the camera. After enduring several seconds in Hopkins' clutches, Cappuccino finally called for the break with his trademark, "Ah, ah, ah, c'mon, let go."

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Ho ho ho! Here are a few nicely attired round-card girls to remind us of what the Christmas spirit is all about.

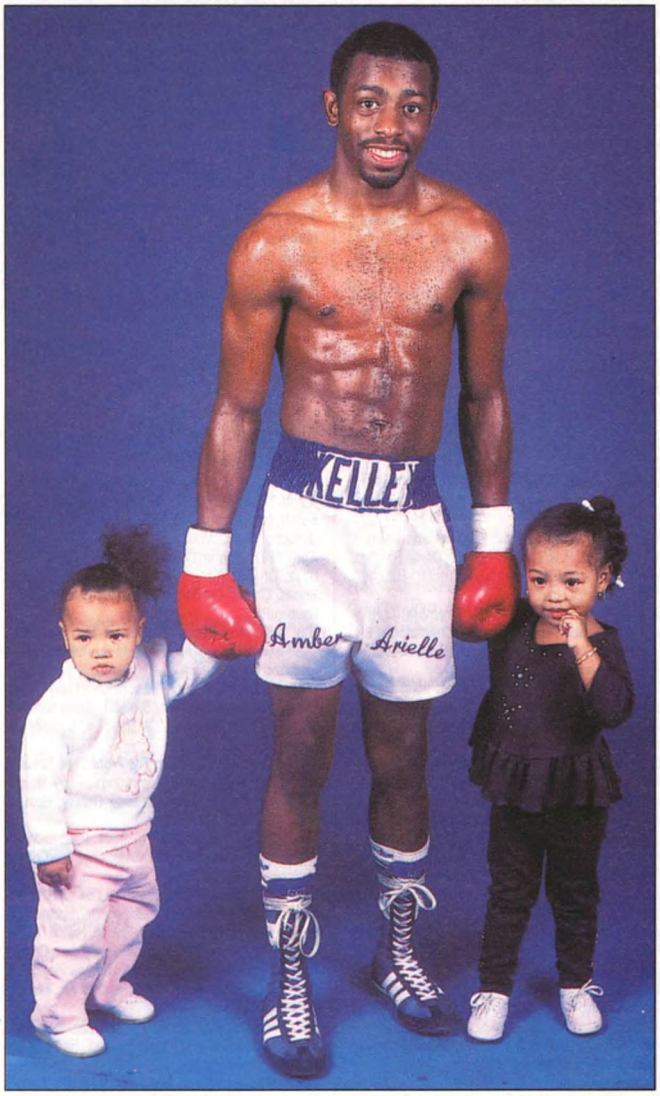
PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Some fighters have a bad habit of hitting the bottle; some fighters have a bad habit of hitting with the bottle. Female lightweight Isra Girgrah chooses to do the latter here, taking aim at A.V. Imports President Albert Pecora. Apparently the six-figure deal Girgrah had just inked to endorse the company's Kutskova vodka wasn't enough to satisfy her.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Flyweight Brian Viloria sets a great example by taking a little time to help the community, doing his part by serving food this past Thanksgiving. It's a good thing that Viloria is handing the food out and not partaking of it, because one hefty meal like that would instantly bump him up three weight classes.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



In this photo taken more than 10 years ago, then-rising featherweight Kevin Kelley shows that boxing trunks can be put to highly practical use, as he utilizes the extra space on his shorts to keep his young daughters' names straight. He just has to make sure to always line Amber on his right side, and Arielle on his left.

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Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

Feb. 1989: Julio Cesar Chavez. Plus: Chavez-Ramirez, all-time lightweight ratings, Louie Espinoza, Simon Brown, Roger Mayweather.

March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

Jan. 1990: Boxing's Bible Reborn At Age 68. Plus: Carlos Monzon, Mike Tyson, Leonard-Duran, Daniel Zaragoza, Nunn-Barkley, Whitaker-Ramirez, George Foreman (color).

Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

April 1990: Pernell Whitaker: Fighter Of The Year (color). Plus: Tiger Flowers, Duran-Leonard, Chavez-Taylor preview, Jorge Paez, Ali-Cooper.

May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!" Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

June 1990: Buster! How James Douglas Shocked The World. Plus: Michael Moorer, Camacho-Paez, Tommy Farr, Excuses, Dick Tiger, Ruben Olivares-Jeff Chandler.

July 1990: "I'm Hungrier Than Ever Before," By Evander Holyfield. Plus: James Toney, Buddy McGirt, Glenwood Brown, Aaron Davis, Michael Carbajal, Jorge Paez, Kid Gavilan, Mark Breland, Ali-Liston II (color).

Aug. 1990: Chavez: His Greatness Confirmed ... Is He The Best Mexican Fighter Ever? Plus: Matthew Saad Muhammad, John L. Sullivan & Mike Tyson, Michael Nunn, Mark Breland, Harold Johnson, Cus D'Amato, Louis-Godoy (color).

Sept. 1990: Marvin Hagler-Can He Resist The Irresistible Temptation? Plus: Thomas Hearns, Sanchez-Saddler, Paul Banke, puncher vs. chin, Beau Jack, Robinson-LaMotta (color).

Nov. 1990: Tyson vs. Foreman. Can Iron Mike Stop The Blast From The Past? Plus: Bruce Seldon, best chins, Sullivan-Kilrain (color), Azumah Nelson, LaStarza.

Dec. 1990: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Douglas-Holyfield preview, Julio Cesar Chavez, Joe Grim, Whitaker-Nazario, Rosi-Van Horn, Benny Leonard, Douglas-Tyson (color).

Jan. 1991: Boxing's Baddest Bad Boy: Nigel Benn Plays By His Own Rules. Plus: Roberto Duran, Kid Akeem, Jose Napoles, Jimmy Carruthers, LaMotta-Zale, Dempsey-Willard (color).

Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay! Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

March 1991: Hunger! It Made Evander A Champ, But ... Plus: Dempsey-Firpo, Charles Murray, Khaosai Galaxy, Nunn-Curry, Henry Armstrong, Sonny Liston (color).

April 1991: Julio Cesar Chavez—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Tyson-Stewart, James Leija, Wilfred Benitez, Pedro Decima, Moore-Bassey.

June 1991: Pain, Frustration, Confidence, And Hope: Meldrick Taylor's Life After Chavez. Plus: Foreman-Holyfield preview, Norris-Leonard, David Kamau, Freddie Steele, Bennie Briscoe, Leonard's career (color).

July 1991: Tyson's Title Hopes: He Ain't What He Used To Be...But It's Not Gonna Matter. Plus: Eusebio Pedroza, Myung Woo Yuh, Willie Meehan, Hearns-Hill preview, computer junior welterweight tournament, Gomez-Fenech, controversial heavyweight finishes (color).

Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Oct. 1991: A Hit Again-How Far Can Thomas Hearns Go? Plus: Battling Levinsky, Oba Carr, Dave McAuley, Muhammad Ali, Lou Ambers, Luther McCarty, ethnic matchups, computer light heavy tournament, Cerdan-Hagler, Rocky Marciano (color).

Dec. 1991: Evander Holyfield vs. Mike Tyson: Who Will Win And Why. Plus: Eddie Aliano, Jack Britton, Muhammad Ali, Pernell Whitaker, rating the 44 world champions, Marcel Cerdan, Henry Cooper, Ezzard Charles-Jersey Joe Walcott (color).

Jan. 1992: The State Of The Game. Plus: Jerry Quarry, Julio Cesar Chavez, Mysterious Billy Smith, Joey Gamache.

May 1992: James Toney—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Myung Woo Yuh, Khaosai Galaxy, Rocky Graziano, Billy Soose, Roy Jones, James Warring, Duran-Chavez, Marvin Hagler (color).

June 1992: What Now? Boxing Without Mike Tyson. Plus: Buck Smith, Liston-Foreman, Billy Graham, Holmes-Mercer, Enrique Pinder, Hilario Zapata, Toney-Tiberi, Benny Lynch, Tony DeMarco, Tyson centerfold (color).

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

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Nov. 1992: Is Riddick Bowe The Next Heavyweight Champion? Plus: Morrison-Hipp, Canizales-Chandler, Chavez-Camacho preview, Australia Best of Nation, Tyson speaks from prison, Corbett-Sullivan (color), Tracy Patterson, Pat Barrett, Knockout Brown.

Feb. 1993: America's Tribute To The Brown Bomber: Joe Louis. Plus: Virgil Hill, Junior Jones, Roger Mayweather, Chicago boxing, Orlando Zulueta, Jose Napoles (color).

March 1993: From Question Man To Answer Man: Riddick Bowe Leaves No Doubts. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Lopez-Gamache, Frank Bruno, Rocky Kansas, Frank Fletcher, Crisanto Espana, Bowe-Lewis (color).

April 1993: Riddick Bowe: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: "Grand Slam" fight card, Toney-Barkley preview, Morris East, Joe Louis-John Henry Lewis, All-Time Top 10: Argentina, Fighters of the Year (color).

May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, THE RING Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

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July 1995: Pernell Whitaker: *The Ring* Makes "Pound-For-Pound" An Official Title. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Ike Quartey, Benn-McClellan, TV prospects, Hector Acero-Sanchez, Harry Matthews, What If ... Robinson-Burley.

Oct. 1995 (92-Page Special): Mismatch? Don't Tell Peter McNeeley! Plus: Fights we'd like to see, Jo-el Scott, Bronco McKart, when stop fights?

Dec. 1995: Mike Tyson (vs. Peter McNeeley): The Beast Is Yet To Come. Plus: Morrison-Lewis preview, Naseem Hamed, Chiquita Gonzalez, Gaspar Ortega, 10 best chins.

Winter 1995 (92-Page Special): Buster Mathis Jr.: "Mike Tyson, You Got A Fight Comin' On." Plus: Holyfield-Bowe III preview, Wayne McCullough, Jesse James Hughes, Norris-Vaden preview, *The Ring* insiders' Poll, What If ... Moore-Ayala Jr.

Jan. 1996: King Bruno! A Hero Always ... A Winner At Last. Plus: Julio Cesar Chavez, Oscar De La Hoya, Chris Eubank, Eddie Perkins, who's hot/who's not.

Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Also: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

May 1996: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Frankie Randall, Tim Witherspoon, Roy Jones, Bernard Hopkins.

Sept. 1996: Lennox Lewis: Tough Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lewis-Mercer, Olympic team, Pernell Whitaker, Mark Johnson, Rocky, Scrapiron Johnson, heavyweight hopefuls.

Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

Dec. 1996: Our Spin On Roy Jones. Plus: heavyweight division, Olympic recap, Luis Rodriguez, Puerto Rican fighters, Danny Hodge, Saad Muhammad.

Jan. 1997: Riddick's Bowe's Promise: "This Time I'm Whipping Golota's Ass!" Plus: David Reid, Pernell Whitaker, Dick Tiger, Juan LaPorte.

May 1997: De La Hoya-Whitaker: Can "Sweet Pea" Stop Oscar's March To Greatness? Plus: Fitzsimmons-Corbett, Junior Jones, Phillip Holiday, Don King, Zaragoza-McCullough.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

July 1997: Leonard: There Wasn't Even A Ray Of Hope. Plus: Felix Trinidad, David Reid, Willie deWit & Shawn O'Sullivan, THE RING's 75th anniversary, Moore-Durelle I.

Oct. 1997: Bang! Naseem Hamed Takes Aim At America. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Phillips-Tszyu, Saman Sorjaturong, Bobby Dykes.

Nov. 1997: Is Mike Tyson Finished? Plus: Ike Ibeabuchi, De La Hoya-Camacho preview, Frankie Conley, Hall of Fame, gloves,

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Jan. 1998: Give This Man His Due! If You Can't Respect Oscar ... You Can't Respect Anyone! Plus: Sanchez-Mayweather, Morales-Zaragoza, Lucia Rijker, Marvin Johnson, characters.

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Holiday 1999 (92-Page Special): Heavyweight Showdowns! Holyfield vs. Lewis II, Grant vs. Golota. Plus: Francois Botha, Arturo Gatti, Michael Carbajal, Rocky Marciano, Lou Filippo.

Jan. 2000: What Does Trinidad's Victory Over Oscar Mean? Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Paul Spadafora, Ralph Dupas, boxing media.

Feb. 2000: Who Is Roy Jones? A Revealing Look At Boxing's Pound-For-Pound Best. Plus: Tyson-Norris, Matty McCue, tactical blunders, best fights of the '90s.

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(ALL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH THE DECEMBER 2000 ISSUE)

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Jan. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Trinidad's Destiny: Jones Is On His Mind ... But Vargas Is In His Face! Plus: Naseem Hamed, Tszyu-Judah, Evander Holyfield, Willie Bean, 20 greatest middleweights.

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March 2001 (108-Page Extra): Tyson! Forget About Retirement ... A Title Shot Awaits! Plus: Ayala-Tapia II, Audley Harrison, Chris Byrd, Kirk Johnson, Julio Cesar Chavez, Boone Kirkman, 12 most exciting rounds.

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Nov. 2001 (108-Page Extra): *The Ring* 100: Ranking The Best Fighters In The World. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Jesus Chavez, Hall of Fame (Sugar Ramos, Ismael Laguna), Luther Rawlings, 15-rounders.

Dec. 2001: The Rock Promises Another Shock! "I'm Gonna Knock Lennox Out Again!" Plus: David Reid, Jones-Gonzalez, McCline-Grant, Jackie Graves, ring deaths.

Jan. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Oscar Feeds His Critics: Did He Chicken Out Against Vargas? Plus: Vladimir Klitschko, Chris Byrd, 20 greatest featherweights, "Caveman" Bob Moha.

Feb. 2002: How I Shocked The World, By Bernard Hopkins. Plus: Marco Antonio Barrera, Fernando Vargas, Francisco Bojado, boxers and national crises.

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GOOD NEWS!

"Ruiz-Holyfield I, II, And III Are History ... There Will Be No IV In Our Lifetimes"

A battered Ruiz managed to hold on to the WBA heavyweight belt with a draw in his third bout with Holyfield, but the boring nature of fight and the controversial decision hurt "The Quiet Man's" prestige.

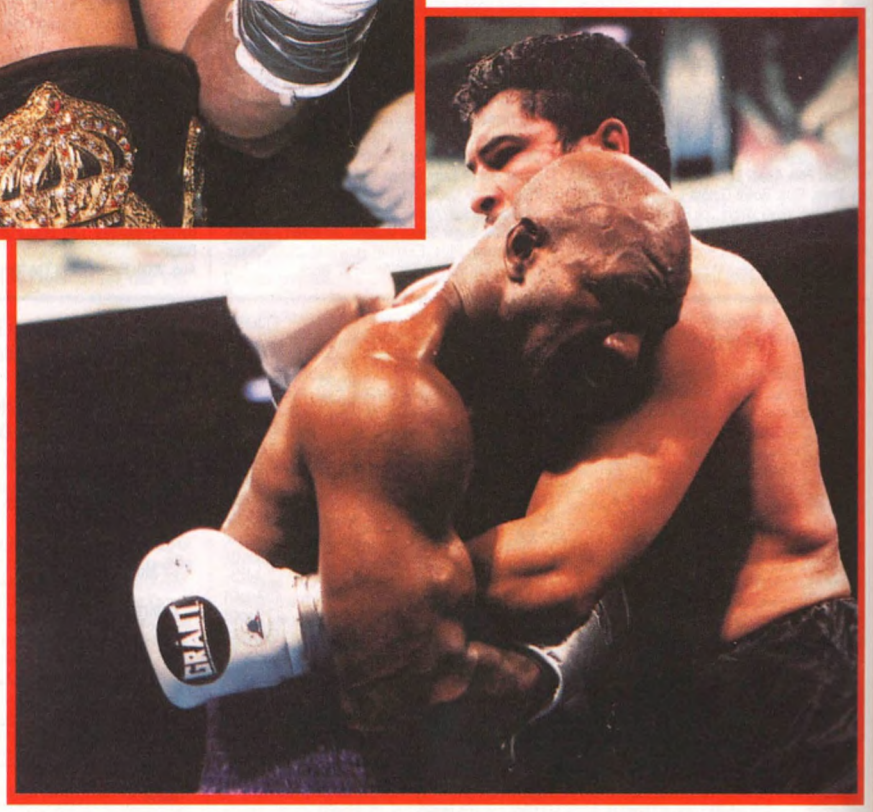
By Ted Bodenrader

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

It was first served up like a tasty cocktail, promising to deliver us a feisty kick. In early-2000, promoter Don King figured that by mixing a little of Evander Holyfield with a touch of John Ruiz, it would nicely blend together to provide a potent dose of *umph*! Swallowing 36 rounds of Holyfield-Ruiz, however, turned out to be like consuming 36 rounds of stale beer.

Hence, the aftertaste of three dizzying affairs, capped off by the nauseating December 15 draw, was enough to turn any fight fan's stomach. By the time a bloodied Ruiz staggered out of the ring with the WBA title belt in tow, we found ourselves asking—actually begging—to be permanently shut off.

"I've seen enough of that," said heavyweight Kirk Johnson, the WBA's top con-



Waltz me around again, honey. Holyfield-Ruiz III featured far more clinching and mauling than punching, which led to an ugly affair that pleased no one. The series stands at 1-1-1 and it's still unclear whom the superior fighter is, but a fourth match seems highly unlikely.

Ruiz did well in his first two fights with Holyfield by utilizing his left jab, but failed to employ it enough in their third encounter. This gave Holyfield an opportunity to move inside unimpeded and score. Ruiz admitted afterward that he fought the wrong fight.

tender, who hopes to soon cut in on the inseparable pair. "I can't imagine anybody wants to see them go at it again."

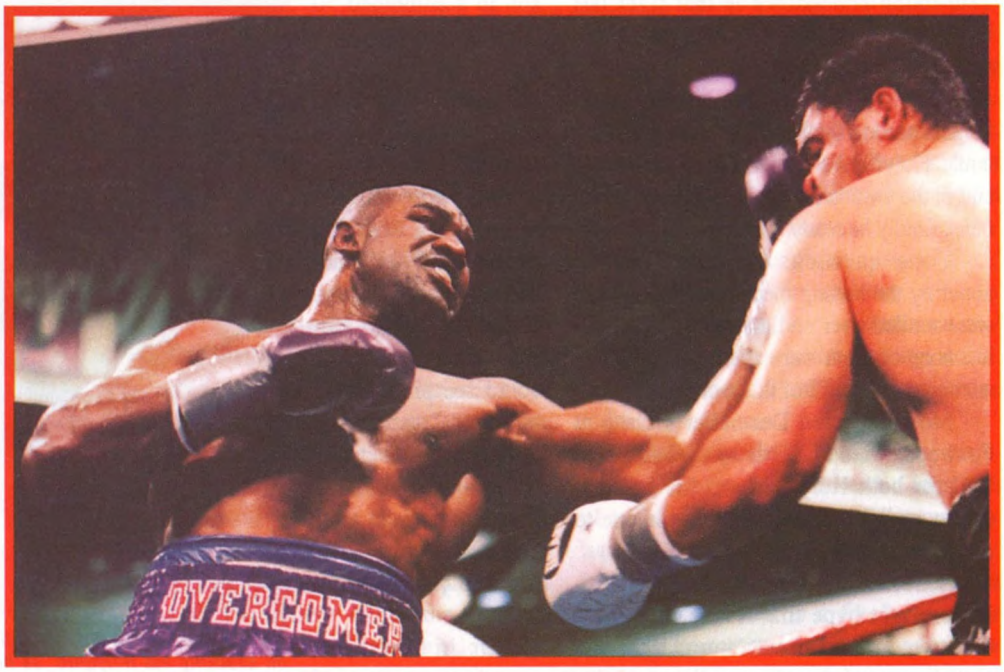
Yes, from the commentators to the fans to the fighters themselves, boxing awoke the morning of December 16 with a sharp, blistering hangover. Not even Advil and a cold glass of water could wash away 36 rounds of Holyfield-Ruiz, a trilogy that did not quite spark the intoxicating high we were yearning for. Instead, we found our heads spinning from too many elbows, headbutts, low blows, clinches, arguments, and, yes, iffy decisions.

The boos were still echoing through the halls of the Foxwoods Casino when the weary patrons stumbled out of the Bingo Hall one by tiresome one. The night began with an atrocious first round, ended with a rancid decision, and offered very little in between.

"Not a very good fight," smirked Zab Judah, the disappointment sagging in his face. "Not a very good fight at all. There was too much holding and not enough punching in there. But the decision was even worse. I think Holyfield took him this time and he deserved the belt back. It was nothin' like the Holyfield-Lewis decision a couple years ago, but it was still pretty bad. I just hope they don't fight no more because it will be a bad mark on boxing."

Consequently, Holyfield-Ruiz will go down as three senseless chapters of heavyweight hogwash that ultimately led us to nowhere. Whereas the Holyfield-Bowe and Ali-Frazier trilogies injected the firepower of a whiskey shot, the Holyfield-Ruiz saga tasted like flat soda.

What made the conclusion so unsatisfying was the promising fizzle that sur-



Holyfield busted Ruiz' nose with a left, late in the fight. But despite his best showing of the series, "The Real Deal" couldn't "overcome" the decision of the three official scorekeepers.

Undefeated Canadian Kirk Johnson is Ruiz' mandatory challenger and should get the next shot at the WBA heavyweight bauble. Johnson will probably be the favorite.

faced in the waning rounds of Holyfield-Ruiz II, when the latter became the first Latino heavyweight beltholder in history, overcoming a 19-second kayo loss to David Tua some five years before.

Shortly after Holyfield arose from an 11th-round knockdown in that fight last March, so did a host of fogging uncertainties. Could Ruiz, once left for dead in the division's morgue, have risen to new heights among the heavyweight elite? And could Holyfield's career, once destined to end in the unification of three championship belts, finally be ready to rest in peace?

These questions that were fumbled about by the boxing media, these ideas that were mulled over endlessly by fight fanatics, none of them were even close to being answered in Part III of this worn-out drama.

Most expected December's clash at Foxwoods would be little more than a Last Call for both Holyfield and his brilliant career, and that Ruiz would be the one to give him the final boot.

Nonetheless, when King bellowed during prefight hype that it was "Johnny's time to score a knockout," it was Ruiz who actually seemed to listen. When Holyfield's camp then leveled seething charges that it was Ruiz—and not the four-time former titlist—who was guilty of flagrant ring fouls, once again, Ruiz did in fact listen. When high-profile media types, folks like HBO's Larry Merchant and ESPN's Max Kellerman, refused to recognize him for months as a bona fide champion, Ruiz tuned in and listened.

It all stewed up in the Boston banger like a bundle of mixed emotions, a whirlwind of anger and frustration that dangerously climaxed on fight night. So when midnight arrived and his corner fired instructions to simply box and work off his bread-and-butter jab as he had in the previous two bouts, Ruiz decided not to listen.

Ruiz, 232, unwisely abandoned a stiff jab that, through their first two meetings, gave Holyfield, 219, a diamond splinter headache, setting up unorthodox, unpredictable powerpunches that drove Holyfield insane.

This time out, Ruiz believed he could swiftly accomplish something that thunder-punching George Foreman, Lennox Lewis, and Mike Tyson in a combined 50 rounds never came close to doing. Ruiz believed he could waltz in and knock out Holyfield.

"He got wrapped up in trying to knock the guy out," said chief trainer Gabe LaMarca. "I was talking to him in the corner, but I could see pretty early he wasn't hearing me. It wasn't that he didn't want to do what we asked. It's just that sometimes you come out and just want to fight."

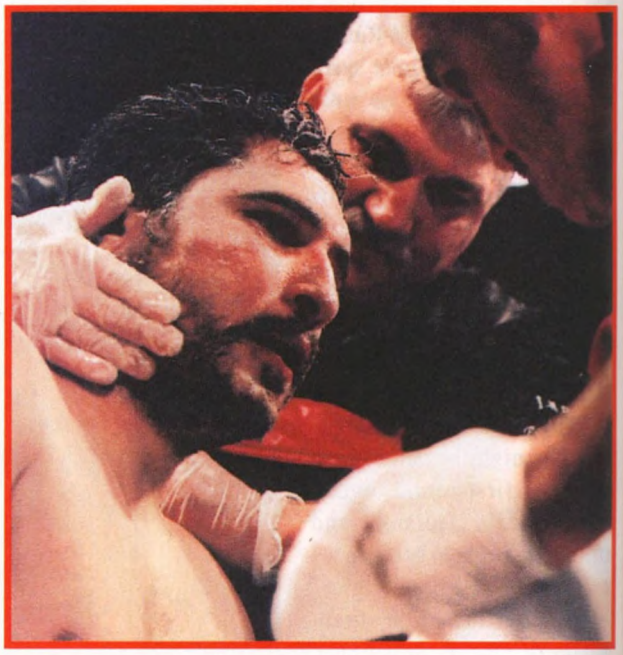
Or in this case, wrestle, grapple, and hold. Holyfield-Ruiz III was muddled with lulls of inactivity and countless clinches, and it made for quite a boring affair. While Ruiz left his jab in the dressing room, it allowed the aging Holyfield to move in on him at will and actually outwork an opponent for the first time in three years.

With the welts and abrasions already marking up Ruiz' angry scowl, Holyfield snuck in a short left hook in the final round that burst open his nose like a tomato. The shot would prompt a late-night visit to the local hospital for Ruiz, who found it troubling to even speak after the bloodbath.

"I fought his fight," admitted Ruiz through the pain. "And I'm upset at myself. I let my emotions take over me. I didn't use my jab the way I should have and I made this fight very difficult on myself."

Yet, Ruiz still injected enough of his hard-nosed approach to leave the door open for what came next. That was when he dodged the biggest hook of the night, as Jimmy Lennon Jr. announced the three scorecards (Don O'Neill had it 115-113 for Ruiz, Julie Lederman 116-112 for Holyfield, and Tom Kaczmarek scored it a 114-114 draw), leaving the WBA hardware in Ruiz' grasp.

While even the pro-Ruiz crowd dissented with the call (THE RING scored it 116-114 for Holyfield), the draw verdict



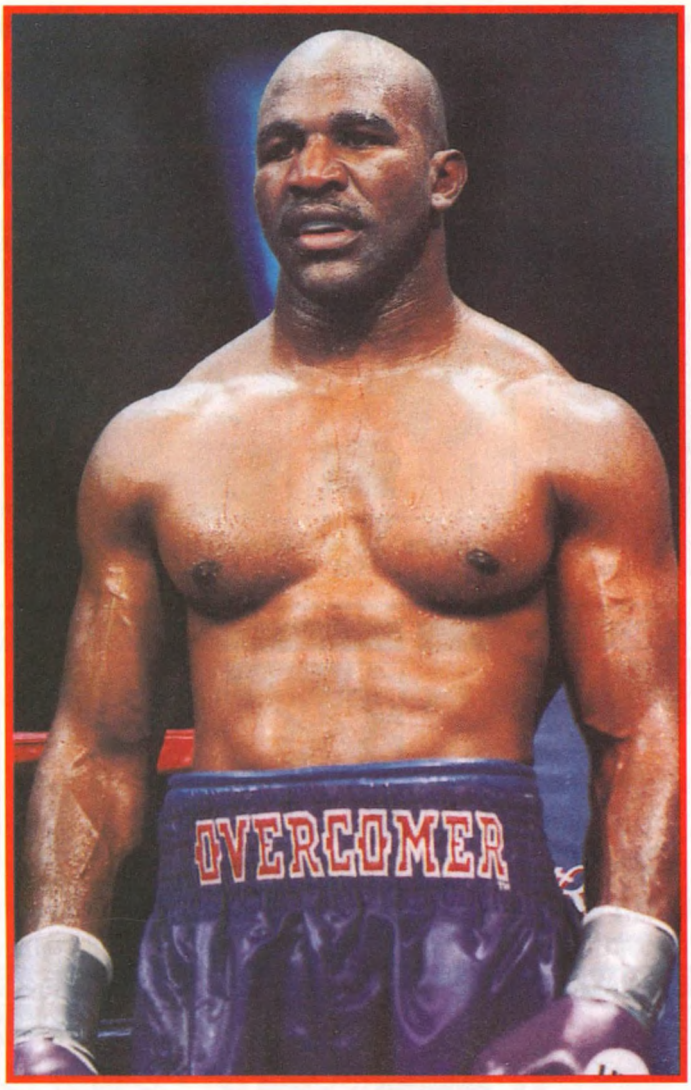
Ruiz' corner tried to get him to fight a smart fight, but he was so intent on knocking out Holyfield, as he almost did in their second fight, he ignored their advice and unsuccessfully tried to land the bomb.

was hardly the grand larceny of the Holyfield-Lewis fiasco of March '99. It was more like a small-time purse-snatching, or in this case, a WBA belt-snatching.

When Holyfield settled in to greet the press afterward, there was more relief than anger drifting through his tired eyes. While the third meeting with Ruiz failed to provide any definitive closure, it also took the absurdity out of the 39-year-old Holyfield's desire to remain in the game.

"I won't quit," he said, matter-of-factly. "I don't quit. Like I've said all along, my goal is to retire as undisputed heavyweight champion. I'll just have to get myself back in line."

After this night, in which Holyfield was neither a ball of life nor the walking dead but somewhere in between, that queue may have shortened considerably. He'll remain a hot player in the Mike Tyson sweepstakes, for a third meeting with his perennial rival still looms as the second most lucrative matchup in the division (behind the proposed Tyson-Lennox Lewis match).



Still a magnificent physical specimen at age 39, Holyfield says he intends to keep fighting in an attempt to regain the undisputed title. He seems unperturbed by the fact that most believe it's a lost cause and that he should retire.

Meanwhile, as the demoralized patrons filed out of the smoky Bingo Hall, among them came Johnson, decked out in black leather, openly salivating at the lips.

It was not the casino's dinner buffet at his side that created such an appetite for the WBA's top contender, but rather the fresh piece of meat known as Ruiz, who staggered into the press conference dripping blood. With Johnson in line for his spring mandatory title shot, the time couldn't come soon enough for him to sink his claws into both Ruiz and the WBA prize.

"I've been hungry for this for a long time," said Johnson. "I've been fighting for over 19 years, and when I get into the ring with John Ruiz and the opportunity to fight for a title, I'll know what to do. I bring a lot to the table that he won't be ready for. I got the moves and the hand speed that this other guy doesn't have left anymore. He should prepare for the fact that I'm not Evander Holyfield."

No, Johnson is no Evander Holyfield, which is exactly why fight fans should not expect a repeat downer from the deceptively dangerous Ruiz. After two years of thinking, sleeping, and breathing Evander Holyfield morning, noon, and night, the mere sight of a new face before him should ignite a fresh bounce to his sturdy legs.

Yet, to solidify the worldwide respect that has so long eluded him, it will take more than a defeat of Kirk Johnson or a draw with Holyfield. While the first two Holyfield bouts accelerated his longtime quest for respect, the latest excursion sputtered it back into neutral.

"I think Johnny was just plain sick of fighting this guy," said LaMarca afterward. "It had an effect on him in the camp and in the fight. You have a hard time getting up for fighting the same guy over and over and over again."

In fact, when Holyfield, 37-5-2 (25), and Ruiz, 37-4-1 (27), barely glanced at each other during the postfight press conference, it was obvious that these two were sick of even breathing the same air.

Unfortunately, it was here, some hundred yards away from the actual ring, where the hottest exchange of the night took place. When Holyfield attorney Jim Thomas demanded a federal investigation into the judges' unruly decision, pointing a furious finger at King in the process, the ensuing verbiage between the two took on *Jerry Springer Show* proportions.

Into the mix jumped Norman Stone, the fiery manager of Ruiz, to pin Thomas with charges of his own, reminding him than an investigation wasn't ordered after Holyfield's controversial decision win in their first meeting in Las Vegas.

Lowering his head shamefully, Thomas seemed to be speaking for all of us when he muttered, "I never thought it would be this embarrassing."

When the anger finally subsided and civility returned, Ruiz' attorney, Anthony Cardinale, came up with a sentiment that should prompt the entire boxing world, including Team Holyfield, into a collective toast.

"Ruiz-Holyfield I, II, and III are history," said Cardinale, underneath a long sigh of relief. "There will be no IV in our lifetimes."

Cheers to that! ■

Ted Bodenrader is a freelance writer based in Boston and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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Year-End Spectacular!

THE BEST OF 2001

Compiled by Nigel Collins, Eric Raskin, & Joe Santoliquito

In an age when what's left of the mainstream boxing media spends most of its time and resources covering contract negotiations and courtroom battles, it's sometimes tough to remember why you fell in love with the Sweet Science in the first place. And that's why THE RING's annual year-end awards are so vital. They not only celebrate the best in boxing from the previous year, but also remind us of what's really important—the fights and the fighters.

While THE RING's tradition of naming a Fighter of the Year dates back to 1928, when Gene Tunney took top honors, the format has grown in size and scope over the decades. Today, we select winners (and honorable mentions) in seven major categories: Fighter, Fight, Round, Knockout, Upset, Comeback, and Event. In addition, there are "The Highly Unofficial Official Awards," a collection of secondary accolades that range from the serious to the farcical.

Another significant part of our year-end package is the "Best Fighter Poll." While each issue of THE RING brings you the editors' opinion of who are currently the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world, this once-a-year survey of experts provides a more broadly based look at one of boxing's most fascinating topics.

For historical perspective, we include a complete list of past winners in every category, which can be quite revealing in and of itself. Did you know, for example, that Muhammad Ali is the only fighter to win Fighter of the Year five times, or that Roberto Duran won Comeback of the Year *twice*?

An interesting adjunct to our yearly awards is the popular "Who Will Stay & Who Will Go?" feature, a fearless attempt to select five current titleholders who will still be wearing belts this time next year, and five who won't.

One of the best aspects of THE RING's annual awards is that it takes into account the entire spectrum of the sport. It's not just the huge, pay-per-view events and superstars that garner attention. In fact, the Fight of the Year for 2001 was a low-budget affair on ESPN2 that featured a couple of guys who are basically clubfighters. But that didn't stop them from creating a spellbinding struggle that is now listed alongside Zale-Graziano, Frazier-Ali, and Hagler-Hearns as one of the greatest fights of all-time.

As with all awards of this sort, subjective opinion plays a large role, so we don't expect readers to agree with every one of our selections. But when it comes to documenting the finest moments of the preceding year, it doesn't even go to the scorecards. THE RING's year-end awards are a knockout winner.

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

BERNARD HOPKINS

PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

Bernard Hopkins has never been shy about letting people know exactly what he wants.

"I want one of those after I beat Felix Trinidad," said Hopkins, pointing to a RING championship belt. "I want to be on the cover wearing it, and I want to be Fighter of the Year!"

While nobody with half a brain would dare underestimate Hopkins, it all seemed very problematical back in mid-April when Hopkins visited THE RING'S editorial offices the week following his victory over Keith Holmes. After all, Trinidad was heavily favored to defeat the Philadelphia tough guy when they clashed in the finals of Don King's Middleweight World Championship Series. And unless "The Executioner" could become the first to beat "Tito," all the honors Hopkins craved would undoubtedly go elsewhere.

But as anyone can plainly see by glancing at the cover of this issue, Hopkins got everything he wanted—and deservedly so. Not only did he knock out Trinidad to become the first undisputed middleweight champion since 1987, he did it with a brilliant display of boxing that harkened back to the glory days when legends such as Ray Robinson, Carlos Monzon, and Marvin Hagler ruled the 160-pound roost. In addition, Hopkins tied Monzon with 14 successful title defenses, making him a virtual lock to establish a new division record in 2002.

The 37-year-old Hopkins has struggled long and hard to reach the point he's at today, and the difficulties and setbacks he's overcome along the way have made him stronger and his ultimate triumph all the sweeter. He didn't come out of the Olympics with a gold medal and a million-dollar contract; he came out of the Pennsylvania prison system with a bus ticket in his pocket and all his worldly belongings in a cardboard box.

But unlike so many young men who are crushed by the criminal justice system, Hopkins had the inner strength to persevere. In fact, it has been his undying faith in himself and his determination to keep going when the odds were

stacked against him, as much as his fighting prowess, that have carried Hopkins to the peak of his profession. And what makes it even more satisfying is that he did it his way, on his own terms, bucking the boxing establishment every step of the way.

There are undoubtedly those within the industry who were unhappy with Hopkins' ascendancy. After all, he's sued virtually every manager and promoter he's ever worked with, but longtime fans and media members who have covered his career since the beginning couldn't be happier. Hopkins is the personification of the hard-working professional, a guy who toils at his craft every day, a proud athlete who never allows himself to get out of shape, a warrior who never backs down from an oppo-

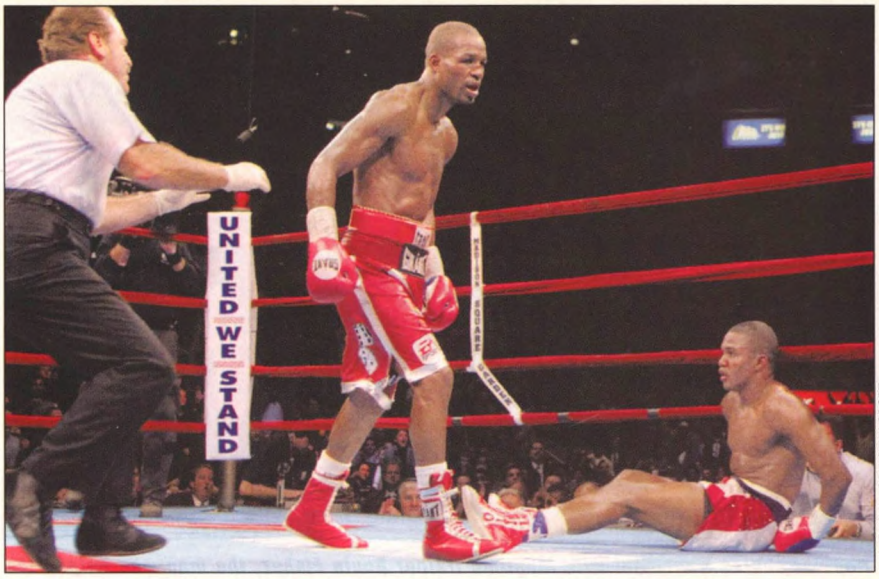


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

The end of one legend and the beginning of another: Hopkins was already way ahead on points when he stopped Trinidad in the 12th round to capture the unified middleweight championship in front of more than 19,000 fans at Madison Square Garden.

HONORABLE MENTION

In other years, top honors may very well have gone to **Kostya Tszyu**, who, like Hopkins, unified his division, scoring an upset victory in the bout that made him the first undisputed 140-pound champion since 1968.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Tszyu: Unified the junior welter title in 2001

When the year began, the only belt Tszyu held was the WBC version, but in February he took on WBA titlist Sharmba Mitchell. It wasn't the most artistic performance, but the hard-nosed Tszyu outlasted the slick boxing Mitchell to win via seventh-round TKO and capture his second belt.

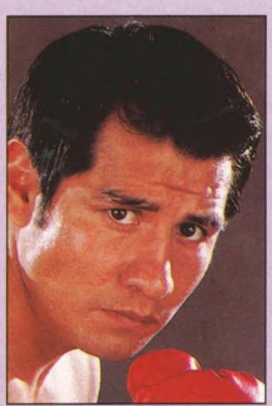
It was generally expected that the Russian-Aussie would go straight to a bout with IBF counterpart Zab Judah for all the junior welterweight marbles, but when he signed to fight obscure mandatory WBC challenger Oktay Urkal instead, some figured Tszyu was trying to duck Judah. The Urkal bout turned out to be tougher than anticipated, and even though Tszyu emerged a unanimous decision winner, it was far from a scintillating showing, and critics couldn't decide whether it was because Urkal was better than expected, or because Tszyu was slipping.

It was not surprising, therefore, that hotshot Judah entered their November unification bout as the favorite. But after getting outboxed and rocked in the opening round, Tszyu made the necessary adjustments, closed the distance, and was already dominating the round when he floored Judah with a right to the jaw in the closing moments of the second.

Judah went down, quickly jumped back up, then pitched forward and crashed to the canvas again. Referee Jay Nady stopped the fight the instant Judah fell the second time, which caused the previously undefeated Brooklyn speedster to throw a temper tantrum that ultimately cost him a $75,000 fine and a six-month suspension. But none of that took anything away from what Tszyu, 28-1-1 (23), had accomplished during the finest year of his career.

A lot of fans were hoping that **Marco Antonio Barrera** would be the one to finally close Naseem Hamed's mouth, though few outside of the Mexican's homeland faithful thought he could actually do it. But when they met in the richest featherweight fight in history, Barrera firmly established his credentials as the best 126-pounder in the world by handing "The Prince" both a boxing lesson and a beating en route to a lopsided 12-round decision. Later in the year, Barrera upped his record to 54-3 (39) with a sixth-round knockout of former WBA junior feather titlist Enrique Sanchez.

WBC super featherweight titleholder **Floyd Mayweather**, who won this category in '98, also had an excellent year. In January, he turned in perhaps his career-best performance, devastating Diego Corrales with a savage blend of boxing and punching to tally a 10th-round knockout. Next came a somewhat disappointing 12-round decision over Carlos Hernandez in which "Pretty Boy" was hampered by sore hands. But it was back to top form in November when Mayweather, 27-0 (20), forced number-one contender Jesus Chavez to quit on his stool at the end of the 10th round, following a bruising, crowd-pleasing encounter.



Barrera: Humbled Hamed

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Hopkins shares a moment with longtime trainer Bouie Fisher, the man who helped the undisputed middleweight champion develop the strategy that led to Trinidad's downfall. The pair have been together on a handshake deal since 1990.

nent. In other words, everything a world champion is supposed to be.

It was also during 2001 that Hopkins, 40-2-1 (29) with 1 no-contest, emerged as one of the game's most forceful and entertaining personalities. Sure, boxing guys knew it all along, but the mainstream didn't get hip until the now-infamous publicity tour to hype the Trinidad fight. While twice throwing the Puerto Rican flag to the ground cast Hopkins as a villain in the eyes of many, it also generated more publicity than anything else that has happened during his 12-year career, especially after the tape of him fleeing from an angry mob in San Juan was shown on practically every television station in the country.

It's ironic how playing the bad guy

BERNARD HOPKINS: THE YEAR THAT WAS

Going into 2001, it seemed like Hopkins might never break out of semi-obscurity and become the superstar he's long deserved to be. True, "The Executioner" had closed out '00 with a rough-and-tumble knockout of dangerous Antwun Echols on HBO, but he still couldn't lure a marquee name into the ring with him. Then along came Don King's Middleweight World Championship Series, and a chance for the Philadelphian to fulfill his dreams.

At first, Hopkins, weary from the court battles that resulted from his association with other promoters, was reluctant to sign with King. But he understood that he would most likely never get another opportunity to unify the middleweight title, and finally joined a tournament that would have been meaningless without his participation.

That's when the fun really began, and by the time 2001 was over, Hopkins was the toast of boxing, an overnight success—12 years in the making.

W 12 Keith Holmes, New York, New York, April 14, 2001: As hard as it might be to imagine now, there was a respectable minority that actually thought WBC middleweight titleholder Holmes was going to beat Hopkins. The reasoning was that the smooth boxing southpaw, who came into the match with a 35-2 (23) record, would be too quick and slippery for him. Then there were the age and wear-and-tear factors. Holmes was four years younger and had been in far fewer taxing fights.

There was also some concern that Hopkins, who has been known to bend the rules from time to time, might foul out. Holmes certainly seemed to be setting the stage for such a possibility during the prefight buildup.

"He's always going to be a dirty fighter," said Holmes. "I just hope the officials recognize this guy for what he is. He has learned through the years how to be a dirty fighter. He's a master at it."

"Keith Holmes is scared to death," countered Hopkins. "Somebody should ask him why he wears his shorts up near his neck."

Thankfully, the bout turned out to be pretty much free of controversy, though Hopkins was docked a point in the fifth round for punching low. Unfortunately, it also turned out to be rather boring. That was because Holmes switched into survival mode relatively early in the fight, clinching darn near every time Hopkins got within punching range.

Still, Hopkins kept plugging away, punishing Holmes with bodyshots (most of them of the legal variety), roughing him up on the inside, and generally making life miserable for the defending WBC titlist. As the fight progressed, the only question that remained was whether or not "The Executioner" could end things inside of the distance. The closest he came was in the 11th, when a series of left hooks had the crowd of 4,223 at The Theater at Madison Square Garden on its feet and Holmes unsteady on his.

Hopkins pounds at Holmes' body

worked for Hopkins, when all the good he's done—lobbying for a pension plan and fair treatment for fighters, testifying before a congressional committee investigating corruption within the sport, trying to help other ex-cons stay on the straight and narrow—were all but ignored.

But now that he's beaten Trinidad in the biggest fight of 2001, Hopkins is suddenly a much sought-after personality. The evening he was presented THE RING championship belt at a fight card held at Manhattan's Roseland Ballroom, Hopkins was inundated with well-wishers, autograph-seekers, and fans that wanted their photograph taken with him. And from the minute he arrived until the second he departed, he graciously accommodated a non-stop parade of people who wanted a moment of his time, proving himself not only a world champion, but a people's champion as well.

In the long run, perhaps Hopkins' greatest legacy will be the example he set for others who find themselves at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. But that's not why he's being honored here. Despite a number of other outstanding candidates *(see sidebar on page 35)*, there was no debate among THE RING editors when the time came to select 2001's Fighter of the Year. It was about as close to a no-brainer as these things get.

Just like Hopkins said it was going to be. ■

PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

All in the family: Hopkins proudly poses with his daughter, Latrece, his wife, Jeanette, and THE RING world championship belt. "The Executioner" is one of only four fighters currently recognized by THE RING as a genuine world champion.

Down goes Trinidad!

But thanks to his octopus-like grabbing, Holmes survived the crisis and lasted the distance.

The unanimous decision—117-110 (Larry Hazzard Jr.), 118-109 (George Colon), 119-108 (Tom Kaczmarek)—in Hopkins' favor was a mere formality.

It had been an untidy affair, thanks mainly to Holmes' incessant holding, but the victory gave Hopkins the WBC belt to go along with the IBF one he'd worn since 1995, and earned him an opportunity to contend for the undisputed title later in the year.

KO 12 Felix Trinidad, New York, New York, September 29, 2001: Seldom in the history of boxing has a fighter talked so much trash and then gone out and lived up to every last word of it. But that is precisely what Hopkins did in what would ultimately prove to be his career-defining fight.

It began in New York City when Hopkins first threw the Puerto Rican flag to the ground, and it escalated into surreal proportions when he did the same thing in same San Juan. Hopkins continued his verbal campaign right up until the final press conference, when he tossed a bag of rice and beans at Trinidad, which was supposed to represent Tito's last meal before The Executioner handed him his head.

Although the bout was postponed two weeks due to the tragedy of September 11, a crowd of more than 19,000 (most of them Trinidad supporters) packed Madison Square Garden for a bout that had become, thanks to Hopkins' antics and nonstop mouth, more than a middleweight unification. By then it was just as much Hopkins vs. Puerto Rico as it was Hopkins vs. Trinidad.

Naturally, Trinidad expected Hopkins to attempt to turn the match into a back-alley brawl, but despite all the tough talk, that was about as far from the Philadelphian's fight plan as you could get. Instead, Hopkins came out moving and jabbing, much to the surprise of everybody outside of his camp.

The first hint that it wasn't going to be Trinidad's night came near the end of the second round, when Hopkins came off the ropes with a straight right that staggered Tito backward across the ring just before the bell.

Hopkins stayed a step and several punches ahead of Trinidad in the early going, and whenever the WBA titlist attempted to forge ahead, the IBF/WBC boss accelerated as well. Each round, Hopkins widened his lead, and when Trinidad went for broke in the 10th, Hopkins outpunched him in the year's best action round.

Trinidad was pretty much a spent force after the hammering he'd absorbed in the 10th, and after more abuse in the 11th, Hopkins put him out of his misery in the 12th. The finishing punch was another right hand to the jaw. Trinidad, 40-1 (33), went down, wobbled up at the count of nine, but was spared additional punishment when his father entered the ring, which prompted referee Steve Smoger to stop the fight at the 1:12 mark.

It had been a virtuoso performance by Hopkins, one that not only made him the undisputed middleweight champion of the world, but also saved him from eating perhaps the biggest portion of crow in boxing history.

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

MICKY WARD W 10 EMANUEL BURTON

The best fights aren't always the biggest ones, with the most enormous international audiences and the most earth-shaking ramifications. In 2001, many of the biggest fights were totally one-sided, with all of the suspense gone by the middle rounds. Hopkins-Trinidad, Mayweather-Corrales, Barrera-Hamed—they all looked like Fight of the Year candidates on paper, but they turned out merely to be great exhibitions of unexpected dominance.

So to find the Fight of the Year in 2001, we had to look a little bit harder. We had to look to a pair of glorified clubfighters waging war at a hole-in-the-wall venue in New Hampshire, fighting for ESPN2 money, and for their futures as boxers. Micky Ward knew if he lost to Emanuel Burton, his title dreams were over. Emanuel Burton knew if he beat Micky Ward, his career and his paychecks would finally rise to that next level. The professional lives of Ward and Burton were on the line on July 13, and for 10 unforgettable rounds, they both extended themselves to the limit, and then somehow reached a little farther.

Ward, the 35-year-old crowd favorite who had been near the top of the mountain several times only to repeatedly slide back to the middle of the pack, made his intentions clear in the first round. He pinned Burton on the ropes 20 seconds into the fight, and kept him there until the round ended, pounding away to the body relentlessly, yet tasting his share of sneaky counters from the talented but ever-underachieving Burton.

PHOTOS BY ANGIE CARLINO

Ward and Burton take turns blasting each other

Burton came back in the second and started exchanging with Ward from a more desirable distance, and with the punches flying at an almost superhuman pace, control swung back and forth. Ward hurt Burton with a left to the body in the third. Burton landed a series of flush left hooks in the fifth. Ward came back with a crackling right hand to the face later in the round. Burton hurt Ward with a left to the body in the seventh, a round punctuated by one of the most awesome exchanges you'll ever see.

Going into the ninth, Ward seemed to be exhausted and trailing slightly, but his persistent body attack finally paid off when a hook to the ribs sent Burton to a knee late in the round. Not surprisingly, with the outcome seemingly in the balance in the 10th, both warriors emptied out everything they had. For proof, all you need to know is that Ward threw 175 punches in the 10th ... and might not have won the round.

Though two of the judges sullied the fight with insulting, one-sided scores in favor of local hero Ward, no result would have been unfair. It was a fight both men deserved to believe they won, because both men fought every round with all they had, risking everything for a little bit of glory on a relatively small stage. Micky Ward and Emanuel Burton will probably never have their names in lights outside Madison Square Garden or Mandalay Bay. But they will have their names in every Year-End Awards issue of THE RING from here on out, because there was no better fight than theirs in 2001. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Brewer has Echols in trouble ... temporarily

If there was one fight that made you hesitate to dub Ward-Burton the Fight of the Year, it was the light heavyweight war between **Julio Gonzalez** and **Julian Letterlough** that featured five knockdowns over the course of 12 heart-pounding rounds. While the punches didn't fly with the sustained fury seen in Ward-Burton, the drama and the momentum shifts were certainly comparable. Letterlough hit the canvas 40 seconds into the fight, but he came back to drop Gonzalez in the third, fifth, and 10th, the last of those requiring Gonzalez to summon an almost superhuman effort to rise off the mat. Somehow, Gonzalez came back to drop Letterlough in the 11th, and he walked away with a well-deserved unanimous decision win. How impressive were the efforts of these fighters? Both winner and loser were granted title shots later in the year.

Though we often criticize the quality of the super middleweight division, the 168-pounders produced two of 2001's most riveting slugfests—and two of the year's most controversial finishes. First, in May, **Charles Brewer** knocked down **Antwun Echols** three times in the second round, only to see Echols roar back in the third and force a stoppage. Brewer was hurt by a right hand, fell into the ropes, and received a standing eight-count. When Echols hammered "The Hatchet" with another barrage moments later, referee Michael Ortega called a questionable halt to the thrilling punchout.

In October, super middles **Thomas Tate** and **Omar Sheika** produced similar fireworks. Tate slammed Sheika's right eye shut with a first-round hook, but Sheika battered Tate mercilessly in the second, sending him halfway out of the ring at one point. Tate was knocked down again in the third, but he battled back in the furious fourth round, after which the fight was stopped on account of Sheika's grotesquely swollen eye.

The best championship-level fight of the year was the much-anticipated junior featherweight showdown between **Paulie Ayala** and **Bones Adams**. Ayala, not known for his pop, nearly took Adams out in the second round, but Adams came back and did enough damage the rest of the way to convince most observers he deserved the decision after 12 fast-paced rounds. It was Ayala that got the split decision, however, putting a mild damper on an excellent battle.

Four days after Thanksgiving, chinny cruiserweights **Ezra Sellers** and **Carl Thompson** gave British fight fans plenty to be thankful for in probably the best overseas fight of '01. Both men were dropped in the first, both went down again in the second, Thompson was floored yet again in the third, and finally Sellers put Thompson away in the fourth to claim the biggest victory of his career.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Ayala digs to Adams' body

ROUND OF THE YEAR

BERNARD HOPKINS vs. FELIX TRINIDAD ROUND 10

Whether you believe in the aftermath of his defeat to Bernard Hopkins that Felix Trinidad is still an all-time great or that he was always an overrated, one-dimensional banger, you have to say this much for him: "Tito" never goes down without a fight. It was something we knew from watching him climb off the canvas to win so many times before, from watching him pressure his way back into the fight against Oscar De La Hoya, from watching him prevail in a grueling war of attrition with Fernando Vargas. So as the bell rang to begin the 10th round of his fight with Hopkins, we knew Trinidad, trailing hopelessly on the scorecards by that point, would summon at least one last stand and try to score a knockout.

Trinidad's hook proved no match for Hopkins' right hand

What we got in the 10th was the very best of what both great gladiators had to offer. It was a microcosm of the entire fight—Trinidad applying the pressure, Hopkins answering with brilliant boxing and timely bursts of aggression—and it was, essentially, the end of the fight. Though it took another two rounds for Hopkins to kayo Trinidad, it was the damage he did in the thrilling 10th that decided this battle for the undisputed middleweight championship.

About 30 seconds into the round, Tito backed Hopkins into a corner, and Hopkins deftly slipped out and landed two hard jabs. "The Executioner" continued to outbox the Puerto Rican hero, blocking a left and countering with a huge right to the chin, and later fighting his way off the ropes with a vicious one-two.

At the midway point of the round, the 10th was looking like the rest of the fight, so Trinidad, who couldn't afford to continue down that path, steeled himself to crank up the pressure even more. He pinned Hopkins on the ropes for 40 seconds, exchanging world-class power blows until Hopkins finally created some space with a brain-rattling left-right combo, but Tito jumped right back on him and pinned him on the ropes again. Trinidad dug in with two hard bodyshots, but Hopkins fired to

the body in return, then shifted to the head and got Trinidad's nose bleeding.

With 35 seconds to go in the round, Trinidad landed his best punch of the fight, a hooking left uppercut that made Hopkins lose his balance for just a moment and clinch. Referee Steve Smoger broke the fighters and stalled the round's momentum by taking a break to adjust Hopkins' trunks, but the fighters didn't miss a beat. Trinidad moved in and winged a ferocious hook, but it fell short, and Hopkins landed three pinpoint right hands in return. Again, Tito pinned Hopkins on the ropes and searched with both hands for an opening, but with two seconds left on the clock, it was Hopkins who found the opening, landing an awesome right uppercut that turned Trinidad's legs into macaroni.

Hopkins was in the zone and he kept firing right hands after the bell, but they didn't make much of a difference. It was that last legal one that ended the suspense and sent Tito back to his corner a beaten man. He'd done everything he could, but it wasn't enough. Hopkins let Trinidad dictate the style and torrid pace of the round, and The Executioner won it anyway, making his crowning as undisputed champion a mere formality.

HONORABLE MENTION

The two strongest runners-up both came from the Fight of the Year, between **Micky Ward** and **Emanuel Burton**. The seventh round was frantically paced, with an all-offense exchange in the final 30 seconds to rival any 30-second clip from Hagler-Hearns, but ultimately, the round was too one-sided in favor of Burton to snag top honors. The ninth round was also breathtaking, and perhaps a bit more dramatic thanks to Ward's fight-saving left hook to the body that accounted for the fight's only knockdown. But this time it was Ward who controlled the action a bit too convincingly throughout the round to compare with the two-way fury of round 10 of Hopkins-Trinidad.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Harris fires a left hook at Juarez

Unfortunately, very few fight fans saw the junior welterweight battle between **Vivian Harris** and **Jose Luis Juarez** that was part of the untelevised undercard of the Fernando Vargas-Shibata Flores show, but it was an outstanding bout, and the fourth round was a minor classic. In the first half of the round, the favored Harris rocked Juarez badly on two occasions, but the Mexican stormed back, knocked his opponent down, and had him stumbling all over the ring before the bell came to Harris' rescue.

Another great round that most boxing fans missed out on was the 10th and final stanza of **Rafael Marquez-Mark Johnson**, which was the off-TV co-feature to Angel Manfredy-Julio Diaz. With the fight up for grabs, both bantamweights managed to rock each other in a series of wild exchanges, and the outcome—a split decision for Marquez—was determined when the referee controversially took a point from Johnson for holding in the closing seconds of the bout.

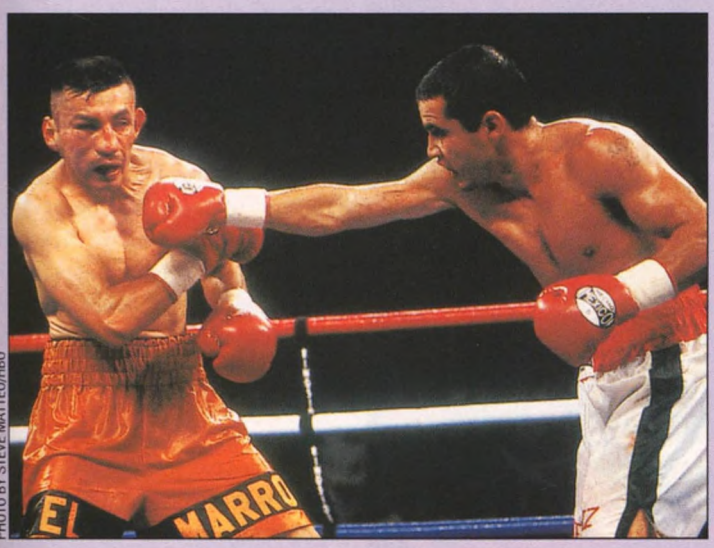


PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Chavez distorts game Arias' face with a right

The WBC lightweight title fight between **Jose Luis Castillo** and **Cesar Bazan** in January featured just the sort of action you'd expect from two proud Mexicans, especially in the fifth round. Bazan was winning the fight until a left hook midway through round five dropped him hard. When he got up, the fight became an all-out slugfest, with Bazan taking the worse of it before backing Castillo up with a crushing hook of his own just before the bell rang.

A pair of junior lightweights with Hispanic blood created similar fireworks in May, when **Jesus Chavez** outslugged **Juan Arias** over 12 rounds. The third round was the highlight, with both men blazing away for three solid minutes and unflinchingly absorbing everything the other had to offer. It wasn't especially stylish, but it sure was electrifying.

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

LENNOX LEWIS KO 4 HASIM RAHMAN

The secret to punching power is the transfer of weight from one side of the body to the other at the moment of impact, but sometimes there are factors involved that go beyond muscle, bone, and reflexes. Sometimes a punch is propelled by passion, a feeling so deeply embedded in the fighter's psyche that it almost becomes an extension of his very being. Such was the case with the thunderous right hand Lennox Lewis unleashed in the fourth round of his rematch with Hasim Rahman. It was a punch that not only knocked out Rahman and regained the heavyweight championship of the world for Lewis, but also a punch that exorcized the memory of the traumatic night in Johannesburg when Rahman took away the title and left Lewis' reputation in tatters.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Lewis sets up Rahman with the left hook (top), then floors him with the right

As if the fifth-round knockout loss to Rahman in April wasn't bad enough, "The Rock" heaped on the humiliation during the prefight build-up, getting the better of an unscheduled rumpus on the set of ESPN's *Up Close*, and winning a running battle of verbal one-upmanship. But instead of having the desired effect of intimidating Lewis, the TV studio scuffle and the incessant insults only fueled his resolve.

It was obvious from the moment he entered the ring at Las Vegas' Mandalay Bay that Lewis was not the same fighter he'd been in South Africa. Not only had his weight dropped from a puffy 253 pounds to a well-honed 246½, the faraway look on Lewis' face had been replaced by one of steely focus. And when hostilities commenced, instead of a range-finding poke, Lewis' jab smacked into Rahman like a telephone pole with a glove attached to the end, and by the conclusion of the first round, the defending champion was leaking blood from a cut over his left eye.

Rahman also jammed home a couple of hard jabs in the opener, but his punch output dropped alarmingly after that. He seemed confused by Lewis'

lateral movement and befuddled by his jabs, and when he tried to fend off Lewis' blows by sticking both arms straight out in front of him like a cartoon sleepwalker, the difference in class was transparent.

Lewis began to put combinations together in the third, then closed the show in the fourth in the most emphatic fashion imaginable. A little more than a minute into the round, Lewis threw a left hook that wasn't calculated to land, but rather to distract Rahman from the right hand that was to follow. Rahman took the bait, blocked the hook with his arms, but never saw the screaming right that connected a split second later. Lewis put every last drop of his pent-up frustration into the punch, and when it collided with Rahman's jaw, the recipient crashed down on his back with a loud thud, his head coming to rest smack in the middle of the "o" on the Don King logo painted on the canvas.

Halfway through referee Joe Cortez' count, Rahman turned over and tried to struggle to his feet, but he was too dazed and slumped to the floor again, where he was counted out at the 1:29 mark. With one mighty blow, Lewis had regained the heavyweight title, exacted revenge, and produced the Knockout of the Year. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Almost as spectacular as **Lennox Lewis'** one-punch demolition of **Hasim Rahman**, was Rahman's similar knockout of Lewis. It too was a flush right hand, and when it exploded on Lewis' exposed chin in the fifth round, it sent the Englishman tumbling down for the count and temporarily changed the face of the heavyweight division.

In another heavyweight shocker with a one-punch finish, former WBC titlist **Oliver McCall**, trailing hopelessly on the scorecards, salvaged his career with a booming right hand that iced **Henry Akinwande** in the waning moments of the 10th and final round.

Not every memorable kayo is produced by a championship-caliber fighter. One of '01's most brutal punchouts was fashioned by journeyman heavyweight **Terrance Lewis**, who drilled **Ed Mahone** with a beautiful right to the head in the ninth round that seemed to momentarily suspend Mahone in midair as he fell over backward in what looked like slow motion.

Mercer blasts Pegues with a right

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO

Neither are spectacular blastouts restricted to the heavyweight division. Featherweight **John Michael Johnson** tallied a scary knockout of **Augie Sanchez**, dropping him hard for the full count with a paralyzing right to the jaw in the opening round. Sanchez was so badly stunned by the knockout blow, he is considering retirement. Even the 108-pound class can create devastating knockouts, as was proven when junior flyweight **Nelson Dieppa** creamed **Andy Tabanas** with a right hand in the 11th round that was so potent, it ended the fight and sent Tabanas to the hospital for observation.

Mosley pancakes Stone

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

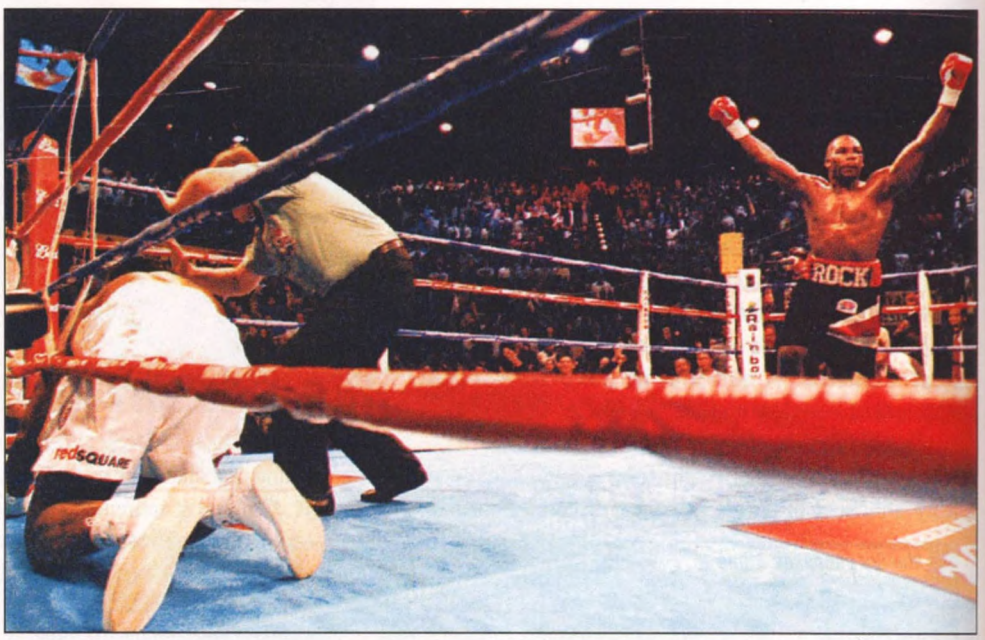
It was a relatively quiet year for pound-for-pound champion **Shane Mosley**, but the WBC welterweight titleholder did generate one of 2001's most aesthetically pleasing knockouts to dispose of British challenger **Adrian Stone**. In the third round, Sugar Shane hurt Stone with a trio of rights, came back with a left hook, then buried his foe with a final right hand.

It's not often that a fighter knocks his opponent clean out of the ring, but old heavyweight warhorse **Ray Mercer** did it twice in '01, albeit against modest opposition. In back-to-back, second-round kayo victories, Mercer blasted **Jeff Pegues** and **Don Steele** through the ropes and onto the floor.

UPSET OF THE YEAR

HASIM RAHMAN KO 5 LENNOX LEWIS

It takes one heck of an upset to be named Upset of the Year in the Year of the Upset. And that's exactly what Hasim Rahman's fifth-round kayo of Lennox Lewis for the heavyweight championship of the world was: one heck of an upset.



Rahman celebrates his stunning kayo of Lewis

Maybe Lewis never should have been the 20-1 favorite some bookmakers listed him as. Maybe 15-1 would have been more reasonable. And maybe it would have been sensible for those odds to drop a little when, two weeks before the bout in high-altitude Johannesburg, we saw Lewis hanging out in low-altitude Las Vegas, taking in the Marco Antonio Barrera-Naseem Hamed fight and filming a cameo role in *Ocean's Eleven*. Perhaps a decrease to, say, 12-1, would have been fair. And maybe those odds should have come down a tad more when Lewis stepped on the scale in South Africa at a career-high 253 pounds. So maybe, after all was said and done, Rahman was only about a 10-1 underdog come fight time.

That still would make him a far bigger underdog than any heavyweight who had won the title since Buster Douglas. And with good reason. Lewis was on the best roll of his career, undefeated since 1994 and fresh off dominant wins over top contenders David Tua and Michael Grant in 2000. Rahman, meanwhile, was still rebuilding from his devastating through-the-ropes blastout at the hands of Oleg Maskaev. He'd fought three times since then, beating trialhorses Marion Wilson and Frankie Swindell, and coming off the canvas to defeat Corrie Sanders in exciting, but hardly confidence-instilling, fashion.

Perhaps the flaws Lewis saw in Rahman's fight against Sanders—a second-rate chin, slow hands, porous defense—were what convinced him to defend against "The Rock." But when fight time came around, Lewis did little to exploit those weaknesses, and the very strengths that beat Sanders—punching power and heart—turned the trick against Lewis.

The first round was close. Lewis struck with a couple of jabs, and Rahman came back with a jab, a right, and a left hook. Lewis took more control in the second and third rounds, stunning Rahman with a hard hook to the body and opening up a cut over the challenger's left eye, but he couldn't find a home for his famous right hand, and he was quickly wearing himself out trying.

By the end of the fourth, the thin air had both men weary and breathing hard, but Rahman had his bloody eye to inspire

him to find the energy to make something happen fast. Midway through the round, The Rock caught Lewis with a right hand in the center of the ring, eliciting that goofy grin Lewis tends to give when he's been buzzed. Moments later, Rahman propelled a retreating Lewis across the ring with a series of jabs, and when Lewis steadied himself along the ropes, he left a small opening above his left hand for a right to loop over. Rahman saw that opening, and Lewis never saw the missile headed for his chin.

At 2:32 of round five, referee Daniel Van de Wiele counted Lewis out, instantly elevating Hasim Rahman from mainstream nobody to new holder of the sporting world's richest prize. It was a moment that defied belief, and it set the tone for a year in which the 'dogs would have more than their share of days. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Lots of 2001's biggest, most meaningful fights ended in major upsets, most notably the middleweight unification superfight between **Bernard Hopkins** and **Felix Trinidad**. Hopkins was supposed to be another big name on Trinidad's road to immortality, but "The Executioner" shocked everyone by dominating nearly every round of the fight and knocking Trinidad out in the 12th round.

The **Marco Antonio Barrera-Prince Naseem Hamed** featherweight megafight was another major bout that saw the favorite toppled. The previously undefeated Hamed was a 3-1 favorite, but Barrera battered him from the opening round on, blending savvy boxing skills and no-nonsense toughness to secure a unanimous decision.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE

Barrera adjusts Hamed's beak

Yet another highly anticipated superfight, the November showdown between **Kostya Tszyu** and **Zab Judah** to unify the 140-pound title, ended with a heavy favorite suffering his first loss. All of Judah's physical gifts weren't enough to overcome Tszyu's focus and pressure, and he scored a shocking second-round TKO with a single booming right hand.

Rahman-Lewis wasn't the only major upset in the heavyweight division. One of the biggest stunners came from little-known **Jameel "Big Time" McCline**, who knocked down former title challenger **Michael Grant** with the first punch he threw, and won by stoppage in 43 seconds.

Another substantial heavyweight upset came in the battle of unbeatens between **Fres Oquendo** and **Clifford Etienne**. The exciting Etienne was being groomed for stardom, but the relatively anonymous Oquendo floored him seven times en route to an eighth-round TKO.

And in a fight to determine the IBF's number-one heavyweight contender, hard-hitting **David Tua** was befuddled by feather-fisted **Chris Byrd**, who slipped, dipped, poked, and pecked his way to a well-earned unanimous decision win.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Byrd soars against favored Tua

Some other notable surprise results: Two-division former titlist **Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson** hadn't lost in over a decade, but that changed when he dropped a split decision to lightly regarded **Rafael Marquez** over 10 exciting rounds; former featherweight titleholder **Guty Espadas** was fresh off a strong performance in losing a disputed decision to Erik Morales when **William Abelyan** came from out of nowhere and dominated him in what was meant to be a tuneup fight; and '96 Olympic gold medallist **David Reid** lost his last traces of luster when clubfighter **Sam Hill** creamed "The American Dream" in nine astonishing rounds.

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

JOHN MICHAEL JOHNSON

A year ago, it was easier to see featherweight John Michael Johnson in a halfway house rather than in a ring. The former WBA bantamweight titlist had only fought twice in the two years prior to 2001, both losses. Also staining his name was a history of drug and alcohol abuse that still hovered over him. Many in boxing thought Johnson was ruined, and placed him in that convenient trialhorse category where has-been boxers go.

Johnson thought otherwise.

Four straight victories, including an emphatic first-round knockout of Augie Sanchez in December, have placed Johnson right back where he was two years ago, before he lost to Lehlo Ledwaba for the vacant IBF junior featherweight title by 12-round decision—in title contention.

Johnson, 30-7 (23), is back with trainer Tony Ayala Sr. He says he's been clean for three years and now has the same acute focus as he did in the mid-1990s, when he handed Junior Jones his first loss to take the WBA bantamweight belt in 1994.

"I ask myself why I did those things to myself," Johnson said, reflecting on his troubled past. "I wanted to get recognized again and make a name for myself again. I managed to get some fights for myself, and prove that it can still be done. I had another kind of life when I wanted to party with my friends, and did things a fighter, or anyone, shouldn't do. I'm getting my high in the ring now. I kind of regret the things I went through."

The 33-year-old Johnson began his comeback with a shaky 10-round split decision over David Murillo in May. But Johnson's stock rose considerably when he upset the tough Antonio "Chelo" Diaz inside of three rounds on Showtime's *ShoBox* series in August. And it rose a little higher still when he prevailed in a war with veteran Harold Grey in September.

Even so, before anyone was ready to proclaim that Johnson had returned to contender status, he would need one more quality victory to push him into that realm.

That's when the Sanchez opportunity arrived. Johnson was a late replacement on the ESPN2 *Friday Nights Fights* card, and most thought he'd end up just another

Johnson became a contender again in 2001

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

name on Sanchez' resume. As a concession to get the payday and added exposure, Johnson was willing to take the fight on 10 days notice, and consequently forced to cut 16 pounds the final two days before the fight, leaving some doubts as to whether or not he was taking a foolish risk.

It turned out to be one the best career moves Johnson has ever made.

Thirty-one seconds was all it took. A devastating right caught Sanchez flush on the chin, sending the 24-year-old "Kid Vegas" down flat on his back and out cold. Sanchez never saw the punch coming. He remained motionless on the canvas for several minutes before coming to his senses.

Yet not everything last year was a knockout for Johnson. He bought a luxury car and invested time and money into making it look sharp. After beating Sanchez, the car was stolen, and later recovered as a burning metal shell.

Johnson shrugged it off. The way he sees it, his career could have easily been left in a shambles like the car if not for the way he rededicated himself to boxing in 2001. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Lewis answered his detractors in the Rahman rematch

In a span of seven months, **Lennox Lewis** went from a decrepit heavyweight many believed was ready for a geriatric home to the king of the heavyweight division for a third time. Hasim Rahman's crushing right hand to Lewis' chin in Johannesburg shocked the world in April. It also rejuvenated Lewis. In November, the 36-year-old Lewis did what he should have done in the first Rahman bout: train properly, not underestimate Rahman, and deliver his own powerful right hand. In regaining the title with a fourth-round knockout, Lewis reminded everyone why he's been such a dominant force the last 10 years.

The undercard of Lewis-Rahman II featured another troubled fighter on the comeback trail: **Oliver McCall**. Like category winner Johnson, "The Atomic Bull" has overcome long spells of drug abuse to earn one last grasp at redemption with a 10th-round knockout of Henry Akinwande.

It seems as if **Manuel Medina's** career has been one long comeback. The 30-year-old Mexican veteran became the IBF featherweight titlist by beating Frankie Toledo in November, capturing a portion of the featherweight title for a record fourth time.

Disproving speculation that he lost his edge after his monumental clash with Felix Trinidad in December 2000, **Fernando Vargas** became a titleholder again in 2001. First, "Ferocious Fernando" came off the floor to knock out Wilfredo Rivera in six rounds in May, then he beat up his pal, Shibata Flores, to claim the vacant WBA super welter title via seventh-round kayo in September.

Jesse James Leija did boxing a big favor by exposing Hector Camacho Jr. as nothing but a fraud in July. Leija was supposed to be another in a line of easy fights set up to make "Macho Jr." look good. Instead, the veteran wound up throwing a jolt into Camacho's plans with a controversial no-contest, which also revived Leija's career.

After being dominated in his final bout of 2000 against Wladimir Klitschko, **Chris Byrd** jumped back into the heavyweight title picture with a 12-round domination of his own against David Tua in August. Some may like his style, some may not, but Byrd deserves credit for the way he outboxed Tua. He was surprisingly entertaining, even aggressive at times. The Tua victory also placed Byrd in a prime spot for a title shot, as the IBF's mandatory contender.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Byrd shocked Tua

EVENT OF THE YEAR

MIDDLEWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

Much scorn has been heaped on Don King over the years, some deserved, some not. But regardless of his motives, there can be no doubt that he did boxing a tremendous service in 2001 by promoting a middleweight unification series that ultimately resulted in the 160-pound title being unified for the first time since 1987. Credit should also go to HBO and HBO Pay-Per-View for providing the financial muscle, and Madison Square Garden for hosting the three-part event. But King was the magician who conjured up the concept and put all the pieces together, and you have to give the devil his due.

The middleweight division has such a rich and glorious history; it was wonderful to see it back in the spotlight after being pretty much relegated to second-class status in recent years. But when the right fights are made, the middleweights are still capable of generating interest, as was evidenced by the 475,000 homes that purchased the pay-per-view of the series final, making it the highest grossing PPV fight of the year.

You cannot overstate the significance of having just one world champion per weight class. This is especially true when you're talking about a division that has historically been second only to the heavyweight class in terms of popularity and prestige. Even though the WBA has already attempted to muddy the middleweight picture with its asinine "super champion" policy, the MWCS firmly established a clear-cut champion, and no amount of alphabet skullduggery can change that fact.

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Holmes, King, and Hopkins pose prior to the first fight of the middleweight unification series

The three-bout tournament kicked off in April with longtime IBF titlist Bernard Hopkins tallying a unanimous 12-round decision over WBC counterpart Keith Holmes. It wasn't a great fight, but it got things underway and unified two pieces of the crown. Next, WBA super welterweight king Felix Trinidad thrilled a festive crowd of 18,235 at MSG in May by taking the WBA middleweight belt away from William Joppy with a devastating fifth-round knockout.

Not even the events of September 11 could dampen enthusiasm for the finals, featuring Hopkins and Trinidad, and the Garden was packed with 19,075 fans to see Hopkins stop "Tito" in the 12th round, just 18 days after the terrorist attack.

It was also fitting that Hopkins, the fighter most fans and insiders had long considered the best 160-pounder in the world, triumphed with a brilliant performance and finally got the recognition he deserved. While his prefight craziness alienated a lot of folks (especially Trinidad fans), Hopkins earned the begrudging respect of the boxing world with what he did inside the ring. His Q-rating also skyrocketed. None of this would have been possible without King's tournament. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

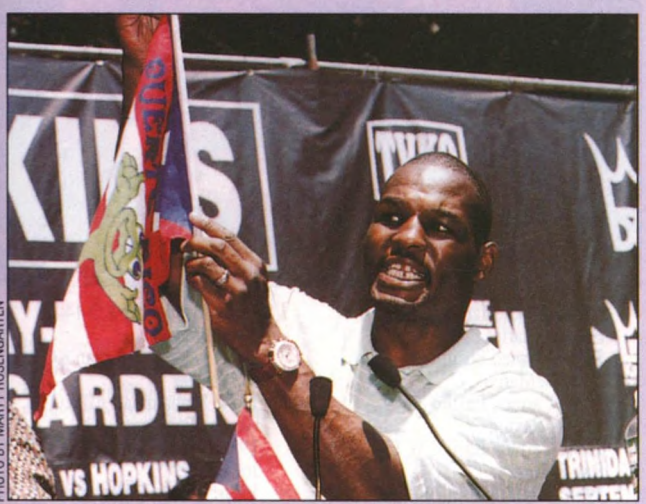


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hopkins showed no respect for the Puerto Rican flag

The prefight publicity tours for the **Hopkins-Trinidad** and **Lennox Lewis-Hasim Rahman II** bouts produced two of the most outrageous and watched events of 2001.

First came Hopkins' flag-throwing incidents, which started in New York City when the Philly tough guy felt he was being disrespected by Don Felix (who insisted that his son had already beaten the best middleweight in the world when he'd kayoed William Joppy) and Don King (who couldn't stop saying "Viva Puerto Rico" long enough to give Hopkins the time of day). Unwilling to be a passive observer at a press conference that had turned into a Trinidad lovefest, "The Executioner" snatched a Puerto Rican flag from Tito's hand and threw it to the ground.

When the media tour reached San Juan, and Hopkins did the same thing again, enraged fans charged the dais, eager to inflict bodily damage. The videotape of Hopkins running for his life, with an angry mob in hot pursuit, was shown on virtually every TV sports news program in the country, turning an already highly anticipated fight into an event that even the mainstream found fascinating.

Hopkins vs. thousands of livid Puerto Ricans may have been a mismatch, but the odds were a lot closer when Rahman and Lewis tangled on the set of ESPN's *Up Close*. The pair had been fairly chummy at the start of the press junket, but grew edgier as the tour progressed. Tempers reached a boiling point when Rahman made an insinuation about Lewis' sexuality. Before you knew it, they were involved in a shoving match that climaxed when "The Rock" slammed Lewis through a table. Some people thought it was a publicity stunt, while others figured it was for real. In the end, it didn't really matter, as the ruckus was televised around the world, providing the kind of hype for their upcoming fight that no amount of money could buy.

Two events of a far more serious nature brought a lot of attention to the sport that it certainly could have done without. In late-June, light heavyweight **Beethavean Scottland** suffered a fatal brain injury when he was knocked out in the 10th round of a bout with **George Jones**. The tragedy was accentuated by the fact that many at ringside, including ESPN2's broadcast crew, had been warning of a possible impending disaster for several rounds before referee Arthur Mercante Jr. finally stopped the fight.

In the other incident, **James Butler** was arrested for assault after he sucker-punched opponent **Richard Grant** after their fight was over. Butler was so incensed that the decision went against him, when Grant extended his hand for the customary postfight handshake, he belted him with his ungloved right hand. Butler was escorted from the ring by police and arrested in his dressing room. Later, the New York State Athletic Commission slapped him with an indefinite suspension. Grant suffered a broken jaw, a cut tongue, and other injuries.

In an event with possible long-term ramifications, U.S. District **Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum** became a defacto matchmaker when she ordered then-heavyweight champion Rahman to defend the title against Lewis next or fight nobody for 18 months. As Cedarbaum's ruling appears to disregard the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act that restricts "coercive" rematches, the case's ultimate consequences remains uncertain.

Rahman bodyslams Lewis during studio brawl

PAST WINNERS

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri/Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong
1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles
1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali/Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali
1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: Ray Leonard/Salvador Sanchez
1982: Larry Holmes

Marciano won Fighter of the Year three times

1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler/Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather
1999: Paulie Ayala
2000: Felix Trinidad
2001: Bernard Hopkins

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

1945: Rocky Graziano KO 10 Freddie Cochrane
1946: Tony Zale KO 6 Rocky Graziano
1947: Rocky Graziano KO 6 Tony Zale
1948: Marcel Cerdan KO 12 Tony Zale
1949: Willie Pep W 15 Sandy Saddler
1950: Jake LaMotta KO 15 Laurent Dauthuille
1951: Jersey Joe Walcott KO 7 Ezzard Charles
1952: Rocky Marciano KO 13 Jersey Joe Walcott
1953: Rocky Marciano KO 11 Roland LaStarza

Robinson hooks Gatti in '98's Fight of the Year

1954: Rocky Marciano KO 8 Ezzard Charles
1955: Carmen Basilio KO 12 Tony DeMarco
1956: Carmen Basilio KO 9 Johnny Saxton
1957: Carmen Basilio W 15 Ray Robinson
1958: Ray Robinson W 15 Carmen Basilio
1959: Gene Fullmer KO 14 Carmen Basilio
1960: Floyd Patterson KO 5 Ingemar Johansson
1961: Joe Brown W 15 Dave Charnley
1962: Joey Giardello W 10 Henry Hank
1963: Cassius Clay W 10 Doug Jones
1964: Cassius Clay KO 7 Sonny Liston
1965: Floyd Patterson W 12 George Chuvalo
1966: Jose Torres W 15 Eddie Cotton
1967: Nino Benvenuti W 15 Emile Griffith
1968: Dick Tiger W 10 Frank DePaula
1969: Joe Frazier KO 7 Jerry Quarry
1970: Carlos Monzon KO 12 Nino Benvenuti
1971: Joe Frazier W 15 Muhammad Ali
1972: Bob Foster KO 14 Chris Finnegan
1973: George Foreman KO 2 Joe Frazier
1974: Muhammad Ali KO 8 George Foreman
1975: Muhammad Ali KO 14 Joe Frazier
1976: George Foreman KO 5 Ron Lyle
1977: Jimmy Young W 12 George Foreman
1978: Leon Spinks W 15 Muhammad Ali
1979: Danny Lopez KO 15 Mike Ayala
1980: Matthew Saad Muhammad KO 14 Yaqui Lopez
1981: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 14 Thomas Hearns
1982: Bobby Chacon W 15 Bazooka Limon
1983: Bobby Chacon W 12 Cornelius Boza-Edwards
1984: Jose Luis Ramirez KO 4 Edwin Rosario
1985: Marvin Hagler KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1986: Steve Cruz W 15 Barry McGuigan
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Tony Lopez W 12 Rocky Lockridge
1989: Roberto Duran W 12 Iran Barkley

Giardello and Hank slug it out in '62

McClellan ices Jackson in '93

1990: Julio Cesar Chavez KO 12 Meldrick Taylor
1991: Robert Quiroga W 12 Akeem Anifowoshe
1992: Riddick Bowe W 12 Evander Holyfield
1993: Michael Carbajal KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1994: Jorge Castro KO 9 John David Jackson
1995: Saman Sorjaturong KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Tapia
2000: Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera
2001: Micky Ward W 10 Emanuel Burton

ROUND OF THE YEAR

1945: Joyce-Williams, 12
1946: Zale-Graziano, 6
1947: Louis-Walcott, 4
1948: Louis-Walcott, 11
1949: Graziano-Fusari, 10
1950: LaMotta-Dauthuille, 15
1951: Marciano-Louis, 8
1952: Marciano-Walcott, 13
1953: Gavilan-Basilio, 2
1954: Moore-Johnson, 14
1955: Moore-Olson, 3
1956: Robinson-Olson, 4
1957: Robinson-Fullmer, 5
1958: Johansson-Machen, 1
1959: Johansson-Patterson, 3
1960: Patterson-Johansson, 5
1961: Patterson-Johansson, 1
1962: Liston-Patterson, 1
1963: Liston-Patterson, 1
1964: Torres-Olson, 1
1965: Torres-Pastrano, 6
1966: Ortiz-Ramos, 5
1967: Tiger-Rouse, 12
1968: Foster-Tiger, 4
1969: Benvenuti-Rodriguez, 11
1970: Ali-Bonavena, 15
1971: Frazier-Ali, 15
1972: Ali-Foster, 5
1973: Foreman-Frazier, 2
1974: Ali-Foreman, 8
1975: Ali-Frazier, 12
1976: Foreman-Lyle, 4 & 5
1977: Young-Foreman, 12
1978: Spinks-Ali, 15
1979: Franklin-Johnson, 8
1980: Saad Muhammad-Lopez, 8
1981: Lee-LoCicero, 5
1982: Gomez-Pintor, 3
1983: Holmes-Witherspoon, 9
1984: Meza-Garza, 1
1985: Hagler-Hearns, 1
1986: Cruz-McGuigan, 15
1987: Seabrooks-Jacob, 1
1988: Tyson-Spinks, 1
1989: Gutierrez-Franklin, 12
1990: Davis-Breland, 9
1991: No Award
1992: Bowe-Holyfield, 10
1993: Norris-Waters, 2
1994: Castro-Jackson, 9
1995: Sorjaturong-Gonzalez, 7
1996: Liles-Littles, 3
1997: Gatti-Ruelas, 5
1998: Robinson-Gatti II, 3
1999: De La Hoya-Quartey, 6
2000: Morales-Barrera, 5
2001; Hopkins-Trinidad, 10

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

1989: Michael Nunn KO 1 Sumbu Kalambay
1990: Terry Norris KO 1 John Mugabi
1991: No Award
1992: Kennedy McKinney KO 11 Welcome Ncita
Morris East KO 11 Akinobu Hiranaka
1993: Gerald McClellan KO 5 Julian Jackson
1994: George Foreman KO 10 Michael Moorer
1995: Julio Cesar Vasquez KO 11 Carl Daniels
1996: Wilfredo Vasquez KO 11 Eloy Rojas
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Roy Jones KO 4 Virgil Hill
1999: Derrick Jefferson KO 6 Maurice Harris
2000: Ben Tackie KO 10 Roberto Garcia
2001: Lennox Lewis KO 4 Hasim Rahman

UPSET OF THE YEAR

1980: Yasutsune Uehara KO 6 Sammy Serrano
1981: Roger Stafford W 10 Pipino Cuevas

Duran came back in '89

1982: Kirkland Laing W 10 Roberto Duran
1983: Gerrie Coetzee KO 10 Michael Dokes
1984: Gene Hatcher KO 11 Johnny Bumphus
1985: Michael Spinks W 15 Larry Holmes
1986: Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6 Donald Curry
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Iran Barkley KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1989: Rene Jacquot W 12 Donald Curry
1990: Buster Douglas KO 10 Mike Tyson
1991: No Award
1992: Azumah Nelson KO 8 Jeff Fenech
1993: Simon Brown KO 4 Terry Norris
1994: Vuyani Bungu W 12 Kennedy McKinney
1995: Willy Salazar KO 7 Danny Romero
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Vince Phillips KO 10 Kostya Tszyu
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Willy Wise W 10 Julio Cesar Chavez
2000: Jose Luis Castillo W 12 Steve Johnston
2001: Hasim Rahman KO 5 Lennox Lewis

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

1980: Shoji Oguma
1981: Jimmy Young
1982: Bobby Chacon
1983: Roberto Duran
1984: Marvin Johnson
1985: Lupe Pintor
1986: Edwin Rosario
1987: Frankie Duarte
1988: Michael Dokes
1989: Roberto Duran
1990: Tony Lopez
1991: Vinny Pazienza
1992: Iran Barkley
1993: Zack Padilla
1994: George Foreman
1995: Azumah Nelson
1996: Danny Romero
1997: Vince Phillips
1998: Kostya Tszyu
1999: Michael Carbajal
2000: Virgil Hill
2001: John Michael Johnson

EVENT OF THE YEAR

1993: Fan Man at Holyfield-Bowe
1994: Revenge: The Rematches
1995: Tyson returns
1996: Riot at The Garden
1997: The bite
1998: Tyson's reinstatement
1999: The IBF indictments
2000: Mosley vs. De La Hoya
2001: Middleweight World Championship Series

Phillips celebrates Tszyu upset

Fan Man crash lands at ringside

THE 23rd ANNUAL HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

Warton: Guided Kostya Tszyu masterfully

Manager Of The Year
Vlad Warton

Trainer Of The Year
Bouie Fisher

Female Fighter Of The Year
Christy Martin

Female Fight Of The Year
Laura Serrano W 6 Chevelle Hallback

Most Exciting Division
Junior Welterweight

Most Boring Division
Junior Bantamweight

Division With Most Potential
Junior Middleweight

Division With Least Potential
Strawweight

Count Dracula Bloodbath Crimson Band-Aid
Aaron Davis KO 8 Vinny Paz
Andrew Lewis Tech. Draw 2
Ricardo Mayorga

Future Champion Trophy
Francisco "Panchito" Bojado

Billy Graham-Joey Giardello Highway Robbery Award
Paulie Ayala W 12 Hugo Dianzo
Willie Jorrin W 12 Oscar Larios
Angel Manfredy W 12 Julio Diaz
Ray Oliveira D 10 Omar Weis

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Diaz-Manfredy: Julio gets shafted

Tony Zale Bodypuncher Memorial
Ricky Hatton

Eder Jofre Best-Fighter-You-Never-Saw Award
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

Duane Bobick Disappointment Award
Clifford Etienne, David Tua, Lance Whitaker, Michael Bennett, Zab Judah

Henry Armstrong Windmill Imitation
Kassim Ouma

Rocky Balboa Gutsiest Effort Award
Emanuel Burton (vs. Micky Ward)
Micky Ward (vs. Emanuel Burton)
Omar Sheika (vs. Thomas Tate)
Thomas Tate (vs. Omar Sheika)
Julio Gonzalez (vs. Julian Letterlough)
Jesus Chavez (vs. Floyd Mayweather)
John-John Molina (vs. Juan Lazcano)
Pernell Whitaker (vs. Carlos Bojorquez)
Beethavean Scottland (vs. George Jones)

Red Light-Green Light Crossroads Fight Of The Year
Juan Lazcano KO 11 John-John Molina

The Comedy-On-TV Golden Giggles Award
Juan Diaz' blubbering embarrassment of an interview after getting off the canvas to decision Ubaldo Hernandez

Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom Featherfists Award
Frankie Toledo

Should've-Stayed-In-The-Pasture Wall Calendar
Lou Savarese, Julio Cesar Chavez, Junior Jones, James "Quick" Tillis

Muhammad Ali Time-To-Retire Pension Check
Miguel Angel Gonzalez, Adolpho Washington, David Izon, Frankie Randall, Fred Pendleton, Herbie Hide

Tony Ayala Jr. Wasted Talent Trophy
Diego Corrales

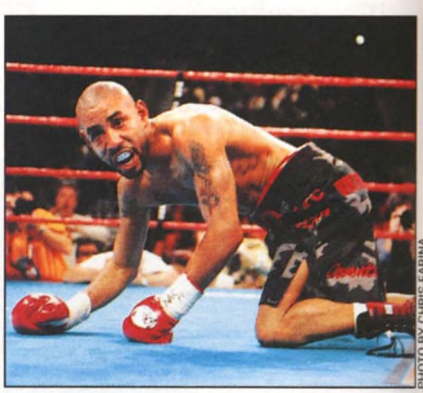


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Corrales: Tons of talent, tons of trouble

Buster Mathis Miniature Empty Refrigerator
Dingaan Thobela

Don't-Get-Up-To-Get-A-Beer Silver Mug
John Michael Johnson KO 1 Augie Sanchez
Jameel McCline KO 1 Michael Grant
Juan Manuel Marquez KO 1 Johnny Walker
Michael Bennett KO 1 Andrew Hutchinson
Joe Calzaghe KO 1 Mario Veit
DeMarcus Corley KO 1 Felix Flores
Micky Ward KO 1 Steve Quinones
Francisco Bojado KO 1 Mauro Lucero

Thomas Dewey "Fading Down The Stretch" Award
Erik Morales (vs. Guty Espadas)

Howard Cosell "We Love Boxing" Trophy
Governor Jesse Ventura
(for abolishing the Minnesota Board of Boxing, saying, "if pro wrestling doesn't need supervision, boxing doesn't either")

Ken Norton Media Good Guy Award
Bernard Hopkins

Muhammad Ali "How To Lose With Class" Trophy
Naseem Hamed (surprisingly enough)

Spit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot Award
Roy Jones, Artur Grigorian,
Colin Dunne, Derrick Gainer

Joe Bugner Just-Glad-To-Be-Here Trophy
Charles Shufford (vs. Wladimir Klitschko)
Derrick Jefferson (vs. Wladimir Klitschko)
Keith Holmes (vs. Bernard Hopkins)
Edwin Santana (vs. Joel Casamayor)
Fred Pendleton (vs. Ricky Hatton)

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Shufford: Just glad to be ... wherever I am

Frightening-Amounts-Of-Blubber Whaling Harpoon
Corey Sanders KO 9 Wolfgramm

Archie Moore Ol'-Man-River Rocking Chair
Uriah Grant

Tap Tap Makathini Name Of The Year
Mlungiseleli Xokoloshe

Jake LaMotta Cast-Iron Chin Anvil
Fernando Zuniga (vs. Charles Brewer)
Raul Frank (vs. Vernon Forrest)
Jesus Chavez (vs. Floyd Mayweather)
Ray Oliveira (vs. Ben Tackie)
Brian Nielsen (vs. Mike Tyson)
Lisa Holewyne (vs. Christy Martin)

Most Improved Fighter Award
Jameel McCline

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

McCline: Stood tall in 2001

Gene Tunney Distinguished Champion Award
Kostya Tszyu

Azumah Nelson "Where'd He Come From?" Trophy
Eidy Moya (KO 11 Adan Vargas)
Manny Pacquiao (KO 6 Lehlo Ledwaba)
Jameel McCline (KO 1 Michael Grant)
Oktay Urkal (L 12 Kostya Tszyu)
Hugo Dianzo (L 12 Paulie Ayala)
William Abelyan (W 10 Guty Espadas)
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (KO 1 Malcolm Tunacao)
Sam Hill (KO 9 David Reid)

TV Mismatches Of The Year
Joe Calzaghe KO 4 Will McIntyre (Showtime)
Hector Camacho Jr. KO 2
Larry LaCoursiere (FOX SportsNet)
Oscar De La Hoya KO 5 Arturo Gatti (HBO)
Shane Mosley KO 3 Adrian Stone (HBO)
Rocky Juarez KO 1 Mike Jones (ESPN2)
Juan Manuel Marquez KO 1
Johnny Walker (ESPN2)
Wladimir Klitschko KO 6 Charles Shufford (HBO)
Ricardo Williams KO 3 Rodney Jones (HBO)
Joel Casamayor KO 8 Joe Morales (Showtime)

Never-In-A-Bad-Fight Purple Heart
Micky Ward, Paulie Ayala, Omar Sheika, Felix Trinidad, Fernando Vargas, Jesus Chavez, Ben Tackie

Best Tiny Man In Elevator Shoes
Eidy Moya

Rip-Off-The-Public Non-Effort Of The Year
Hector Camacho Jr. (vs. Jesse James Leija)
Dingaan Thobela (vs. Eric Lucas)
Emanuel Augustus (vs. Leonard Dorin)

Steve Martin Arrow-Through-Head Ridiculous Gimmick
"GOOFi" Whitaker

Mando Muniz "If At First You Don't Succeed" Persistence Award
Eric Lucas, Winky Wright, Yober Ortega

Yogi Berra "It's Not Over Till It's Over" Resiliency Award
Oliver McCall (KO 10 Henry Akinwande)
Byron Mitchell (KO 12 Manuel Siaca)
Antwun Echols (KO 3 Charles Brewer)
Debind Thapa (KO 6 Isidro Tejedor)
Kermit Cintron (KO 5 Said Ouali)

"And Even When It's Over" Medal Of Dishonor
James Butler (L 10 Richard Grant)

Dave Tiberi Disappearing Fighter Award
Virgil Hill, James Page, Nestor Garza

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Hill: Wins a title, then vanishes

Emile Griffith "Steady If Unspectacular" Trophy
Reggie Johnson, Eric Harding, Winky Wright, James Leija

Gerry Cooney Proper Pigmentation Award
Wladimir Klitschko

"BEST FIGHTER" POLL

A Survey Of The Experts

It's hard to deny that 2001 was the Year of the Upset in boxing, and due to the abundance of surprises between the ropes, the landscape of the sport certainly made seismic shifts. That showed in this year's edition of THE RING's annual pound-for-pound best fighter poll.

Despite facing subpar opposition in '01, Shane Mosley broke through this year to claim the number-one spot, receiving six of a possible 10 first-place votes. Mosley, based on his impressive victory over Oscar De La Hoya last year, came within a trickle of toppling Felix Trinidad for number one in the 2000 poll.

Mosley accumulated 123 points, followed by Roy Jones (108 points), and Bernard Hopkins (98). Hopkins made a huge jump since last year's poll, moving up six places from number nine to number three, courtesy of his masterful 12-round destruction of Trinidad.

Trinidad, however, was the best example of how boxing changed in 2001. Last year, Trinidad was recognized by our poll as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, fueled mightily by his impressive 12th-round knockout of Fernando Vargas in December 2000. But due to the loss to Hopkins, "Tito" fell from number one, with 126 points, to number seven in 2001, with 39.

A familiar refrain was heard from experts about undisputed light heavyweight champion Jones, objecting to the minimal effort Jones seems to put forth, and their general displeasure with Jones' level of opposition, which included Derrick Harmon and Julio Gonzalez in 2001. Jones, however, maintained the longest current streak going in the poll, being named among the 10 best pound-for-pound for the 10th straight year, tying the record set by Pernell Whitaker from 1989-'98.

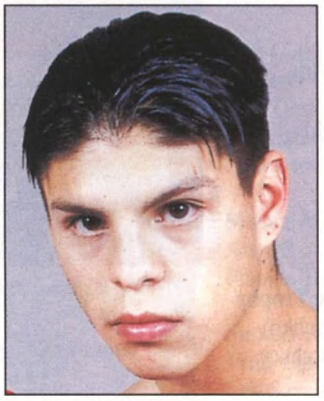
This year's panel of experts: exciting teenage lightweight Francisco "Panchito" Bojado, HBO boxing analyst Larry Merchant, *USA Today* boxing writer Dan Rafael, ring announcer Mark Beiro, *Newark Star-Ledger* boxing writer Chris Thorne, *Las Vegas Review-Journal* boxing writer Kevin Iole, former WBC super featherweight titlist James Leija, New York *Daily News* boxing writer and Showtime roving reporter Tim Smith, and ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* blow-by-blow announcer Bob Papa.

To compile the standings, we awarded points for each vote a fighter received: 15 points for a first place vote, 12 for a second-place vote, nine for a third-place vote, seven for a fourth-place vote, six for a fifth-place vote, five for a sixth-place vote, four for a seventh-place vote, three for an eighth-place vote, two for a ninth-place vote, and one for a 10th-place vote.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Shane Mosley crushes Adrian Stone with a right

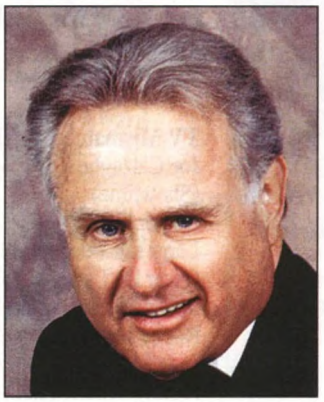
FRANCISCO BOJADO



1. Shane Mosley
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Ricardo Lopez
4. Marco Antonio Barrera
5. Roy Jones
6. Kostya Tszyu
7. Oscar De La Hoya
8. Fernando Vargas
9. Felix Trinidad
10. Floyd Mayweather

"Shane was an underdog against De La Hoya, but I know that's not true anymore. Shane can beat anyone around his weight class, because of his style and his ability. I also like Hopkins really high, because of how easily he beat Trinidad, who was considered one of the best going in."

LARRY MERCHANT



1. Shane Mosley
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Roy Jones
4. Felix Trinidad
5. Floyd Mayweather
6. Marco Antonio Barrera
7. Kostya Tszyu
8. Oscar De La Hoya
9. Erik Morales
10. Vassiliy Jirov

"I think Mosley is the most complete fighter of our time. I selected Hopkins because of his championship winning streak and his masterpiece victory over Trinidad. Mayweather is getting better and a good bet to reach the top someday. De La Hoya is still a terrific fighter, but he hasn't beaten a top opponent since Ike Quartey."

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Roy Jones makes another easy title defense against Julio Gonzalez

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Bernard Hopkins shocks the world against Felix Trinidad

DAN RAFAEL

1. Shane Mosley
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Roy Jones
4. Floyd Mayweather
5. Marco Antonio Barrera
6. Kostya Tszyu
7. Oscar De La Hoya
8. Ricardo Lopez
9. Felix Trinidad
10. Tim Austin

"I have Shane number one not only because I think he's the best fighter in the world, but when he fights second-rate opposition, he leaves no doubt. Hopkins I put ahead of Roy because he's been fighting better competition in the last couple of years, and he knocked off Trinidad, whom many had in the top three."

CHRIS THORNE

1. Shane Mosley
2. Roy Jones
3. Floyd Mayweather
4. Lennox Lewis
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Kostya Tszyu
7. Felix Trinidad
8. Ricardo Lopez
9. Marco Antonio Barrera
10. Tim Austin

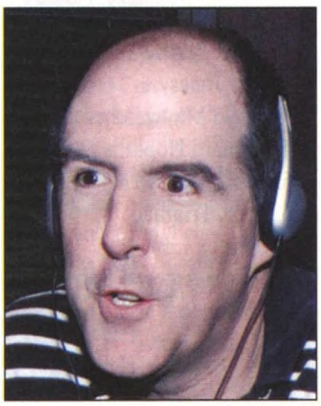
"The top four guys have been solid guys the last year. But Mosley's performance against Oscar De La Hoya puts him up top. Floyd is someone moving up, and he may wind up moving up a little farther. Hopkins might deserve to be a little higher rated, but overall I think Lewis has beaten better opponents in his career."

MARK BEIRO

1. Roy Jones
2. Floyd Mayweather
3. Shane Mosley
4. Oscar De La Hoya
5. Bernard Hopkins
6. Marco Antonio Barrera
7. Erik Morales
8. Vernon Forrest
9. Eric Morel
10. Ricardo Lopez

"There's no secret what I think about Roy Jones. There's not an issue about whom he faces, because his skills haven't diminished, in my opinion. The top five are interchangeable, but figuring out the bottom five could cause you to have a car accident on a California interstate."

KEVIN IOLE



1. Floyd Mayweather
2. Shane Mosley
3. Roy Jones
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Felix Trinidad
6. Marco Antonio Barrera
7. Oscar De La Hoya
8. Ricardo Lopez
9. Kostya Tszyu
10. Vassiliy Jirov

"Floyd is a guy who has made some excellent fighters look less than average. He took Diego Corrales apart and made him look like an amateur. If Floyd's mind is right, there is no one who can beat him. Eddie Futch once told me he's seen Floyd make moves he hasn't seen anyone make in 50 years. That's very high praise."

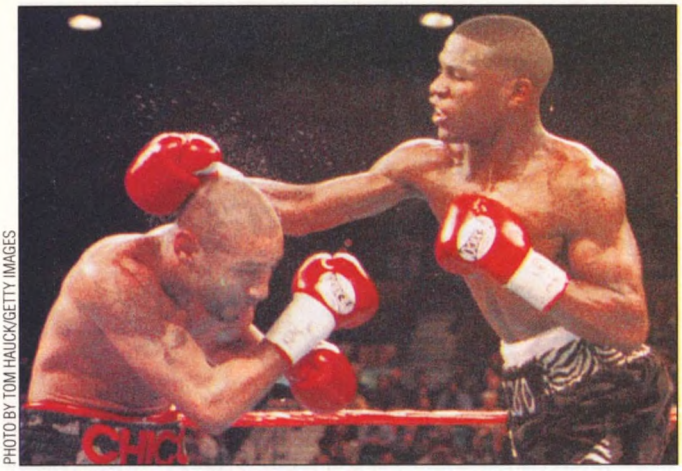
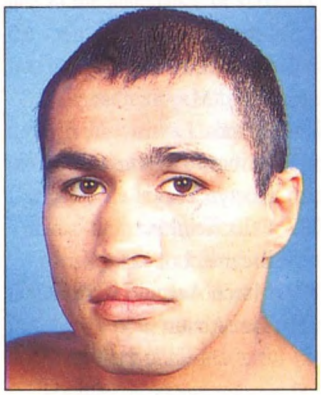


PHOTO BY TOM HAUCK/GETTY IMAGES

Floyd Mayweather looks to finish Diego Corrales

Marco Antonio Barrera stuns Naseem Hamed with a left

JAMES LEIJA



1. Roy Jones
2. Shane Mosley
3. Bernard Hopkins
4. Kostya Tszyu
5. Floyd Mayweather
6. Lennox Lewis
7. Felix Trinidad
8. Oscar De La Hoya
9. Marco Antonio Barrera
10. Fernando Vargas

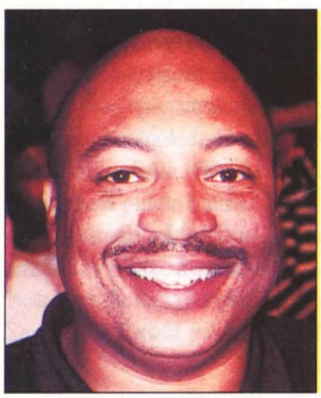
"Jones is still an undisputed champ, and it's hard to go against someone like Jones when he's done so much to prove himself. Shane Mosley is one of the most talented fighters out there, and Hopkins beat one of the best fighters in the world in Trinidad. I put Tszyu really high because he beat Zab Judah."

BOB PAPA

1. Bernard Hopkins
2. Roy Jones
3. Shane Mosley
4. Lennox Lewis
5. Floyd Mayweather
6. Oscar De La Hoya
7. Felix Trinidad
8. Kostya Tszyu
9. Marco Antonio Barrera
10. Erik Morales

"I put Hopkins at number one, because of his great victory over Trinidad and his overall achievements throughout his career. Mosley is in that mix of fighters, like Jones, who's up there based on ability. You have to give Lewis his due because of the way he won the title back. He's beaten everyone put in front of him."

TIM SMITH



1. Shane Mosley
2. Roy Jones
3. Floyd Mayweather
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Oscar De La Hoya
6. Felix Trinidad
7. Lennox Lewis
8. Marco Antonio Barrera
9. Fernando Vargas
10. Kostya Tszyu

"I think that, technically, Shane is the best boxer in the game today. At the very core, Shane is a boxer who loves what he does. Roy is a marvelous athlete who is very good at boxing. But I don't know if he has the same passion for boxing as Shane does. When it's time to close the show, Shane does it. He doesn't carry opponents."

THE RING

1. Shane Mosley
2. Bernard Hopkins
3. Roy Jones
4. Marco Antonio Barrera
5. Floyd Mayweather
6. Felix Trinidad
7. Oscar De La Hoya
8. Ricardo Lopez
9. Kostya Tszyu
10. Erik Morales

"Bernard Hopkins' victory over Felix Trinidad was impressive, but not overwhelming enough to unseat Shane Mosley as the best pound-for-pound fighter. Though Mosley had a subpar year in terms of competition, 'Sugar Shane' still dominated Shannan Taylor and Adrian Stone the way the best in the world is expected to."

THE RESULTS

1. Shane Mosley—132 points
2. Roy Jones—108
3. Bernard Hopkins—98
4. Floyd Mayweather—77
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—44
6. Oscar De La Hoya—40
7. Felix Trinidad—39
8. Kostya Tszyu—34
9. Lennox Lewis—23
10. Ricardo Lopez—22

ALSO RECEIVING VOTES

Erik Morales—8
Fernando Vargas—6
Vernon Forrest—3
Tim Austin—2
Vassiliy Jirov—2
Eric Morel—2

2000 POLL

1. Felix Trinidad—126
2. Shane Mosley—123
3. Roy Jones—109
4. Oscar De La Hoya—43
5. Floyd Mayweather—39
6. Naseem Hamed—37
7. Ricardo Lopez—35
8. Diego Corrales—33
9. Bernard Hopkins—32
10. Lennox Lewis—31

1999 POLL

1. Roy Jones—150
2. Oscar De La Hoya—85
3. Floyd Mayweather—78
4. Shane Mosley—68 (tie)
4. Felix Trinidad—68 (tie)
6. Mark Johnson—47 (tie)
6. Ricardo Lopez—47 (tie)
8. Erik Morales—21
9. Bernard Hopkins—16
10. Fernando Vargas—15

1998 POLL

1. Roy Jones—141
2. Oscar De La Hoya—123
3. Felix Trinidad—67
4. Shane Mosley—65
5. Evander Holyfield—55
6. Mark Johnson—45
7. Naseem Hamed—33
8. Ricardo Lopez—23
9. Floyd Mayweather—19
10. Pernell Whitaker—14

1997 POLL

1. Oscar De La Hoya—123
2. Roy Jones—117
3. Ricardo Lopez—83
4. Evander Holyfield—80
5. Felix Trinidad—65
6. Pernell Whitaker—37
7. Naseem Hamed—28
8. Mark Johnson—22 (tie)
8. Junior Jones—22 (tie)
10. Johnny Tapia—18

1996 POLL

1. Roy Jones—123
2. Oscar De La Hoya—107
3. Pernell Whitaker—92
4. Evander Holyfield—64
5. Felix Trinidad—59
6. Ricardo Lopez—56
7. Terry Norris—28
8. Ike Quartey—21
9. Azumah Nelson—12
10. Yuri Arbachakov—11

1995 POLL

1. Roy Jones—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—126
3. Oscar De La Hoya—74
4. Felix Trinidad—59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—48
6. Riddick Bowe—44
7. Ricardo Lopez—37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—18
9. Ike Quartey—16
10. Naseem Hamed—12

1994 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—130
2. Roy Jones—129
3. Frankie Randall—53
4. Ricardo Lopez—45
5. Orlando Canizales—39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez—38
7. James Toney—36
8. Gerald McClellan—33
9. Felix Trinidad—29
10. Kevin Kelley—28

1993 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—86
3. Terry Norris—84
4. James Toney—76
5. Michael Carbajal—39
6. Evander Holyfield—36
7. Buddy McGirt—28
8. Roy Jones—23
9. Orlando Canizales—22
10. Ricardo Lopez—21

1992 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—136
2. Terry Norris—91
3. Pernell Whitaker—85
4. Buddy McGirt—60
5. Riddick Bowe—45
6. Orlando Canizales—36
7. Azumah Nelson—34
8. Lennox Lewis—24
9. Julian Jackson—18
10. Roy Jones—15 (tie)
10. Mike McCallum—15 (tie)

1991 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—100
3. Evander Holyfield—78
4. Mike Tyson—55
5. Meldrick Taylor—48
6. Mike McCallum—38
7. Thomas Hearns—34
8. Khaosai Galaxy—25
9. Terry Norris—22
10. Simon Brown—21

1990 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—123
2. Pernell Whitaker—104
3. Mike Tyson—71
4. Meldrick Taylor—57
5. Buster Douglas—51
6. Simon Brown—27
7. Antonio Esparragoza—25
8. Michael Nunn—23
9. Evander Holyfield—21
10. Humberto Gonzalez—14

1989 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—91
3. Meldrick Taylor—61
4. Michael Nunn—60
5. Evander Holyfield—56
6. Pernell Whitaker—46
7. Ray Leonard—28
8. Jeff Fenech—27
9. Azumah Nelson—18
10. Marlon Starling—16

1988 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—118
3. Evander Holyfield—66
4. Ray Leonard—55
5. Jeff Fenech—44
6. Michael Nunn—33
7. Azumah Nelson—32
8. Jung Koo Chang—23
9. Buddy McGirt—21
10. Sumbu Kalambay—18

NO POLL IN 1987

1986 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—138
2. Mike Tyson—92
3. Donald Curry—59
4. Thomas Hearns—52
5. Edwin Rosario—47
6. Azumah Nelson—45 (tie)
6. Michael Spinks—45 (tie)
8. Evander Holyfield—32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez—26
10. Hector Camacho—22

1985 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—150
2. Hector Camacho—86
3. Michael Spinks—85
4. Donald Curry—78
5. Thomas Hearns—42
6. Barry McGuigan—32
7. Milton McCrory—25
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—22 (tie)
8. Pinklon Thomas—22 (tie)
10. Larry Holmes—21

1984 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—112
2. Aaron Pryor—77
3. Larry Holmes—72
4. Eusebio Pedroza—66
5. Hector Camacho—50
6. Jeff Chandler—47 (tie)
6. Ray Leonard—47 (tie)
8. Michael Spinks—45
9. Thomas Hearns—34
10. Donald Curry—26

1983 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—147
2. Aaron Pryor—93
3. Larry Holmes—91
4. Michael Spinks—66
5. Jeff Chandler—57
6. Thomas Hearns—45
7. Alexis Arguello—29
8. Wilfredo Gomez—28
9. Hector Camacho—24
10. Eusebio Pedroza—12

1982 POLL

1. Ray Leonard—142
2. Alexis Arguello—97
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Salvador Sanchez—72
5. Wilfred Benitez—68
6. Larry Holmes—61
7. Jeff Chandler—25
8. Eusebio Pedroza—18
9. Aaron Pryor—17
10. Thomas Hearns—14 (tie)
10. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—14 (tie)

1981 POLL

1. Thomas Hearns—116
2. Ray Leonard—108
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Larry Holmes—75
5. Alexis Arguello—62
6. Wilfredo Gomez—58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad—24
9. Wilfred Benitez—18
10. Roberto Duran—13 (tie)
10. Aaron Pryor—13 (tie)

1980 POLL

1. Roberto Duran—96
2. Ray Leonard—93
3. Wilfredo Gomez—88
4. Danny Lopez—65
5. Pipino Cuevas—54
6. Alexis Arguello—40
7. Larry Holmes—32
8. Wilfred Benitez—26
9. Vito Antuofermo—25 (tie)
9. Matthew Saad Muhammad—25 (tie)

WHO WILL STAY

Five Men Who Will Keep Their Titles ... Five Who Won't

By William Dettloff

Regardless of how scientific we try to make it sound, a lot of the time predicting a winner in a fight is a crapshoot. How many guys do you know who picked Bernard Hopkins to beat Felix Trinidad, Marco Antonio Barrera to beat Naseem Hamed, or Hasim Rahman to beat Lennox Lewis? Throw in Chris Byrd over David Tua, Jameel McCline over Michael Grant and "GOOFi" Whitaker, and even John Michael Johnson over Augie Sanchez. Upsets are a big part of this business. You can know everything there is to know and still be wrong half of the time.

If you think it's hard to consistently pick a winner, try predicting what titlists will still hold a belt a year down the road, as we do every year on these pages. Talk about a crapshoot. Fortunately, there are some variables that help us out. For instance, the quality of a champion is important, but maybe more important is the quality of his challengers. It's all relative. A guy doesn't have to be great; he only has to be better than the guys he's fighting. Following that logic, a moderately skilled cruiserweight titlist should have little trouble wringing out a longer-than-average reign. On the other hand, many times a beltholder is sprung from the same lowly crop as his contenders—he just got lucky and got the title shot before his compatriots did. The super middleweight division—where the titles change hands every 20 minutes, it seems—might be a good example of that principle at work. Whether the titlist just wants to stay where he is or take risks against big names is critical, too. There is much to consider, and we've considered it all in coming up with our predictions of what champions and beltholders will remain champions and beltholders in the 12 months to come.

The Five Who Will Stay

KOSTYA TSZYU
Junior Welterweight World Chamption

In terms of its effect on the junior welterweight division, the significance of Tszyu's victory over Zab Judah cannot be overstated. It's not just because it unified the title, or because it was the most important fight at 140 since Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor. By getting rid of Judah, Tszyu removed from contention the fighter most believed was easily the greatest threat to his title reign. Regardless of whether you think the stoppage was wrong, it's done, and Tszyu never has to fight Judah again if he doesn't want to.

It may turn out that Judah's deficiencies—or Jay Nady's jumpiness, depending on your point of view—made Tszyu look better than he is, or that Judah never was that great to begin with, and there are more dangerous guys out there for Tszyu. But if you believe Judah is the second best 140-pounder in the business, then Tszyu has little to fear from Ben Tackie, Micky Ward, Randall Bailey, or DeMarcus Corley. He's already beaten Sharmba Mitchell and Oktay Urkal and he's expressed no desire to jump to welterweight. His next true threat will come from Floyd Mayweather, and it's unlikely that will happen before 2003.

Tszyu added the WBA 140-pound belt to his collection by beating Sharmba Mitchell in February '01 (pictured), and he went on to unify with previously unbeaten IBF titlist Zab Judah nine months later. If the campaign he had in '01 is any indication, Tszyu's reign as undisputed junior welter champ is going to last a while.

& WHO WILL GO?

OSCAR DE LA HOYA
WBC Super Welterweight Titlist

If you believe De La Hoya when he says he wants to fight Shane Mosley, Felix Trinidad, Bernard Hopkins, and Fernando Vargas, then this is a risky call indeed. Three out of four of those guys are in the top 10 of everyone's pound-for-pound ratings. Vargas is in the top 20. Hell, Trinidad and Mosley have already beaten De La Hoya. But there's still good reason to think "The Golden Boy" will greet 2003 as a champion.

First, the most likely scenario is that De La Hoya will fight three times: two big fights—Trinidad and Vargas or Trinidad and Hopkins or Hopkins and Vargas—and his mandatory against Roman Karmazin. Take Mosley out of the equation—if that fight happens it won't be until '03 when Mosley has gotten used to fighting at 154 pounds. And Karmazin should be easy. That leaves Trinidad, Hopkins, and Vargas. You have to make De La Hoya at least even money against Trinidad judging by their first fight and by what Hopkins was able to do to "Tito." We think De La Hoya wins that one. Conversely, Hopkins should beat De La Hoya, but that bout would likely be for Hopkins' middleweight belts—not De La Hoya's junior middleweight title. And De La Hoya enters a fight against Vargas as a solid favorite. We're still not sure Vargas has gotten over the beating Trinidad gave him and even if he has, De La Hoya is superior in every category except power. That should be enough.

Even if he takes on far better fighters than Arturo Gatti, De La Hoya has what it takes to keep winning in '02. Certainly, fighters like Felix Trinidad and Fernando Vargas present a serious threat to "The Golden Boy," but the WBC super welterweight titlist's talent may overcome whatever other excellent boxers are in his path.

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

Lewis looked great winning the WBA welterweight belt via seventh-round kayo over James Page, but his limitations were exposed in his first two defenses. Still, by flying under the radar and staying away from the likes of Shane Mosley and Vernon Forrest, "Six Heads" should keep his belt throughout the year.

ANDREW "SIX HEADS" LEWIS
WBA Welterweight Titlist

Shortly before we went to press, Vernon Forrest and Shane Mosley signed a contract to meet at Madison Square Garden. In terms of prolonging his title reign, that was the best news Lewis could have gotten. Yes, he missed out on the big payday Forrest ended up getting. But he certainly would have lost to Mosley if he'd gone after him instead of letting Forrest do it, and for less money than Forrest got. (He doesn't have an amateur win over Mosley he could work into the promotion.) But Forrest's willingness to take on Mosley allowed Lewis to quietly drop back into the welterweight background while the division's big dogs slugged it out up top. And in the background it's safe.

The ironic part, of course, is Lewis probably is no better than third best at welterweight. But by flying just under the radar, he can keep the title a while longer, at least until the end of 2002 in our estimation. He likely will fight a rematch with WBA number-one contender Ricardo Mayorga, and assuming he survives that, and he should, he has a few other gimmes in the WBA hopper: Denmark's Thomas Damgaard, Michel Trabant, Chantel Stanciel. He's good enough to lick those guys and some legitimate contenders too, such as Antonio Margarito or Antonio Diaz. Staying in the background will get him through the end of the year.

VASSILIY JIROV
IBF Cruiserweight Titlist

Jirov and WBC counterpart Juan Carlos Gomez have a pretty good thing going. Both of them are fairly young and

they both can fight. That's more than you can say for the rest of the cruiserweight division, and that's why it's good to be them. They both have a heck of a chance to remain in the driver's seat throughout 2002. We chose Jirov because, frankly, we've seen him fight a number of times, we know what he can do and can't do. Gomez is more the unknown commodity.

Jirov is a flawed guy; his defense is terrible, he swells easily, and he wants desperately to be a heavyweight, which he is not. But he's tough, he's undefeated, he has an extensive amateur background, and if he's not the best bodypuncher in the game, he's second best. Now look at the landscape: former WBA titlist Fabrice Tiozzo, who was flattened by Virgil Hill, of all people; Brit Johnny Nelson, who has 12 losses on his record; James Toney, who these days makes Sally Struthers look like Erik Morales; and Marcelo Dominguez, who's lost to Gomez, what, 23 times now? Youngsters Wayne Braithwaite and O'Neil Bell look promising, but are too green to throw in with Jirov. Unless we're missing something, Jirov will be around a while. Get comfortable.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Jirov's first-round blowout of Terry McGroom illustrated what a wide gap there is between "The Russian Tiger" and the average cruiserweight contender. Look for Jirov to continue to exploit that gap in 2002.

ROY JONES
Light Heavyweight World Champion

We'd like to be able to say that Jones will be champion at this time next year because he's still too much fighter for Bernard Hopkins. We'd like to say he'll still be a champion because even on his worst day he could beat Dariusz Michalczewski or Joe Calzaghe or Sven Ottke or Vassiliy Jirov or Juan Carlos Gomez or even a few of the smaller heavyweights. But none of that explains why he'll still be a champion at this time next year.

Jones will still be a champion because he won't pursue any

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

As long as he keeps feasting on second-tier guys like Julio Gonzalez—and there's no reason to believe he won't—Roy Jones won't be knocked from his light heavyweight perch. And even if Jones took on more credible opponents like Dariusz Michalczewski, he'd be a huge favorite to win.

fights that are even moderately dangerous. He won't fight Hopkins or Michalczewski or Jirov or Gomez. He'll say he wants to, but he won't fight Chris Byrd or Fres Oquendo or John Ruiz. He'll fight Antonio Tarver maybe, or Eric Harding again, and whoever else the organizations tell him to fight. So, yes, Roy Jones will still be a champion throughout 2002, and from a business standpoint you can't fault the guy for doing it his way. The thing is to get there and stay there and make some bucks, and he'll continue to do that. Good for him. But, oh, what a terrible waste of talent.

The Five Who Will Go

LENNOX LEWIS
Heavyweight World Champion

Lewis is riding high these days off of his title-regaining knockout win over Hasim Rahman. Good for him. It was completely convincing, and Rahman was begging for it. But remember that Rahman never was an upper-echelon heavyweight. He was an average, top-12 contender when he knocked Lewis flat, and he was the same fighter when Lewis got his revenge. Also, it may be that overconfidence and other factors put Lewis in position to be nailed by the right that won Rahman the title, but Lewis' chin is his chin whether or not he's in shape and whether or not he's fighting down to the level of his competition. It's a liability.

There are several good reasons to think Lewis will not be a champion by the end of 2002. First, he likely will fight Mike Tyson in April. Of course he's the favorite, but if Tyson can reach that chin in the first four or five rounds, who knows? If Rahman's right could do it, couldn't Tyson's? Same goes for Wladimir Klitschko, whom Lewis has expressed some interest in meeting,

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

As awesome as he looked in his rematch with Hasim Rahman, Lewis remains a chinny, aging champion. Between Mike Tyson, Wladimir Klitschko, and retirement, there are several realistic threats to end Lewis' latest reign.

and whom a lot of observers are calling the rightful number-one contender. And if he beats those guys? Lewis, who will be 37 in September, recently told a British newspaper that after he beats Tyson he'll retire. It wouldn't be the first time a fighter fibbed about calling it quits, but with Lewis we get the sense that if he says it, he means it.

That's the good news for Medina. The bad is that in order to win the title four times you had to have lost it three times. Medina is a crafty, gritty little fighter, but his great singular talent is using his head to open scar tissue on the other guy. If he can't do that and the other guy is a legitimate top-10 or top-five guy, Medina's in a bit of trouble. There's a reason he has 11 career losses, and it'll be 12 before the year is out. But don't be surprised if he's back again in 2003.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Lucas was impressive knocking out Glenn Catley for the vacant WBC super middle belt, but Catley is no world-beater. If the ordinary Lucas steps up the competition even a little bit in '02, his reign could be in serious jeopardy.

MANUEL MEDINA

IBF Featherweight Titlist

You have to give it to Medina. It was way back in 1991 that he beat Troy Dorsey for the IBF featherweight title, and ever since he's been gum on the shoe of the featherweight division. Win some, lose a couple, win some more, drop one here and there again, and then win a title. Medina has been in with about every decent featherweight of the last 10 years, several more than once, and, impossibly, he's only 30 years old. His stoppage of Frankie Toledo in November began his fourth—yes, his fourth—title reign at 126 pounds, and get this: All have been won in the ring.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Medina's sixth-round stoppage of Frankie Toledo made him a four-time featherweight titlist, but his previous three reigns didn't last particularly long. At age 30, Medina isn't a strong candidate to suddenly put together a string of defenses.

ERIC LUCAS

WBC Super Middleweight Titlist

If you saw Lucas' win over Dingaan Thobela and, to a lesser extent, his knockout victory over Glenn Catley to win the title, you know why his name appears on this side of the ledger rather than on the other. He's exceptionally ordinary. Being ordinary doesn't necessarily guarantee a short title reign, however; look at how long Frankie Liles was on top. Lucas could conceivably finish up the year as the titleholder if he decides to go the safe route—as Liles did—and just take on mandatories. The roll call is excruciating: Markus Beyer, David Starie, Catley, Danilo Haussler.

The sense here, though, is that Lucas won't do that. He'll go for a bigger money fight or two, and that means someone like Omar Sheika or Thomas Tate or even Dana Rosenblatt will get a shot before the year is through. The rumor is that Vinny Paz is lining himself up for a go at Lucas and, well, Paz is a lot of things, not all of them good, but he knows where the weak link is in the chain. If he doesn't get to Lucas, someone else will.

VIRGIL HILL

WBA Cruiserweight Titlist

It sure made for good copy when Hill starched Fabrice Tiozzo in the first round to win the WBA cruiserweight title. Everyone thought Hill was done and that Tiozzo was this immovable chunk of French fighter who couldn't lose, at least not in France. So Hill bounced him all over the ring and had another chance to make some good money, and

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Hill became a cruiserweight titlist by beating Fabrice Tiozzo via upset first-round knockout in December '00, but "Quicksilver" hasn't fought since. That sort of inactivity can have a drastic effect on a 38-year-old fighter like Hill.

maybe they could swing a cruiserweight unification tournament, and maybe … and then nothing. That was December 2000. Hill hasn't been in a ring since.

First there was a back injury, then a hand injury or something, then this, then that. Hill is 38 years old now, and some guys think his inactivity has a little to do with a certain bushy-haired promoter he had to agree to do business with in the future in order to get his crack at Tiozzo. Either way, 38-year-old guys who don't stay active decline quickly, especially guys like Hill who live on their legs and on speed. The WBA ratings at 190 are just pitiful—the top rated contender as of November was one Jean Marc Mormeck, another Frenchman—but it won't take an exceptional guy to beat an old, rusty, Hill. And that's if he's not stripped for inactivity first.

BYRON MITCHELL
WBA Super Middleweight Titlist

Based on his first fight with Manuel Siaca last year, maybe you could make an argument for why Mitchell lasts through 2002 as a beltholder. He was getting outworked for 11 rounds, sure, but he delivered the power when he needed it and flattened Siaca in the final round. And with power like that, a guy can reign a while. Unfortunately, when they had a rematch a few months later, Mitchell forgot what won him the first fight, got outworked again and was nearly kayoed in the 12th, and won a highly questionable split decision. It was a little bit like his two fights with Bruno Girard, when he started quickly and then fell apart in the later rounds. He's a good guy and he can punch when he feels like it. If only he felt like it more often when he's in the ring.

The WBA ratings at 168 are about as laughable as they are everywhere else, but decent fighters are sprinkled in: Thomas Tate, Omar Sheika, Charles Brewer, Siaca. But Andrei Schkalikov is nothing great, and neither are Glenn Catley or Markus Beyer. The problem is, when Mitchell goes into one of his midfight funks and forgets to throw punches, he can be beaten by anyone. It's unfortunate because the guy has the talent to be a good fighter, just not the mentality apparently, and that's the most important part, right? Without that, a guy will have a heck of a hard time getting through a full year with the belt intact. That's why Mitchell won't. ■

Many observers thought Byron Mitchell received a gift in his September '01 rematch with Manuel Siaca, and the WBA super middle titlist's luck may run out soon. Mitchell has explosive power, but he doesn't move his hands enough to take full advantage of it.

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July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

July 1986: Tyson, McGuigan, Hagler: The Stars Catch Fire And Boxing Is Hot Again! Color Pinup: Azumah Nelson. Also: Camacho-Chavez.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Plus: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

Aug. 1987: Sweet Victory! Sugar Ray Humbles Hagler. Color Pinup: Leonard vs. Hagler. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Spinks-Cooney preview, Donald Curry.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King-But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

May 1988: KO Exclusive-Mike Tyson, As Only Mike Tyson Knows Him. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Tyson-Spinks Poll, Michael Dokes, Virgil Hill.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: KO's Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Feb. 1989: George Foreman Is Born Again. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Bill Cayton. Also: The Olympics, Davey Hilton, John Mugabi, Barry McGuigan.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Nov. 1989: The Real Duran; The Stories Behind The Legend. Color Pinup: Orlando Canizales. Interview: Mike Trainer. Also: Edwin Rosario, Rosi-Van Horn.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

May 1990: Chavez vs. Taylor: The Best Matchup In The Last Five Years. Color Pinup: Daniel Zaragoza. Interview: Pernell Whitaker. Also: Leonard-Hearns, Glenn McCrory, Prince Charles Williams.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: KO Interview-Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: KO Interview-Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

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Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive KO Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Nov. 1991: Mike Tyson-The Only Heavyweight That Matters. Color Pinup: Thomas Hearns. Interview: Troy Dorsey. Also: Fenech-Nelson, James Toney, lost art of bodypunching.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield-The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: KO Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

Aug. 1992: Bowe Knows The Big Fight: The Top Contender Analyzes Holmes-Holyfield. Color Pinup: Julian Jackson. Interview: Michael Spinks. Also: Thomas Hearns, Blue Horizon, fighting fear, Toney-Barkley, Greg Haugen.

Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, Ali-Shavers.

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Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win and Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

May 1993: Recapping The Future: Julio Cesar Chavez' Road To 100-0. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Junior Jones. Also: Buddy McGirt, Riddick Bowe, Raul Marquez.

Dec. 1993: The KO Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

July 1994: The Upset Epidemic! Carbajal's Conqueror: Chiquita Gonzalez. Color Pinup: Junior Jones. Interview: Rafael Ruelas. Also: Jake Rodriguez, Czyz-Hearns preview, Randall-Chavez II preview.

June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Plus: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

March 1996: Whether He Fights Or Not ... Tyson Is Hot! Hot!! Hot!!! Color Pinup: Marco Antonio Barrera. Interview: Jose Sulaiman. Plus: Reggie Tuur, heavyweight prospects, champion's edge.

June 1996: Destined For The Hall Of Fame: Who's In, Who's Out. Color Pinup: Wayne McCullough. Interview: Cedric Kushner. Plus: Danny Romero, Mark Breland, Dynamite Dozen—the next 12.

July 1996: Awesome Again! Tyson Destroys Bruno. Color Pinup: Tyson-Bruno. Interview: Christy Martin. Plus: Chavez-De La Hoya preview, Derrick Gainer, '96 Hall of Fame inductees.

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Plus: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The

KO **100.** Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Plus: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

Dec. 1996: Andrew Golota—Taking The Low Road to Stardom. Color Pinup: Mark Johnson. Interview: Rock Newman. Plus: De La Hoya-Gonzalez, Chuck Bodak, bizarre endings, Chavez-Rosario.

Winter 1996: This Is War! Holyfield-Tyson Will Be Explosive ... And Short. Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Plus: Riddick Bowe, David Reid, Holyfield-Qawi.

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Feb. 1997: KO's 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Plus: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

March 1997: Holyfield's Trainer Tells All! An Inside Look At The Upset Of The Year. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Plus: George Foreman, Lupe Pintor, boxing bill, Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Plus: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

Sept. 1997: A Legitimate Grudge Match! Why Romero-Tapia Could Be The Fight Of The Year. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: David Tua. Plus: Ike Quartey, George Foreman, top promoters.

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Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Plus: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Plus: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Plus: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

May 1998: Living Up To The Hype: Sometimes They Do ... Sometimes They Don't. Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Best Of ... (Part III). Plus: Naseem Hamed, Marty Denkin, women's boxing.

June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield:
Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Plus: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Plus: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Plus: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Plus: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

Nov. 1998 The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Tim Austin. Plus: Cesar Bazan, Spencer Oliver, Bobby Czyz.

Dec. 1998: Winning Fights Is Easier Than Winning Fans: Why Can't We Appreciate Roy Jones? Color Pinup: Tim Austin. Interview: Michael Grant. Plus: Christy Martin, Ali Reform Act, one-hit wonders.

Holiday 1998: Toe-To-Toe With The Top 10: Where Does Tyson Fit In? Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Inteview: Larry Hazzard. Plus: Evander Holyfield, junior middleweights.

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March 1999: Exposed! Is Hamed Really Hector Camacho In Disguise? Color Pinup: Mike Tyson. Interview: Joe Frazier. Plus: Zab Judah, Vuyani Bungu, Frankie Randall.

May 1999: The Tyson Of Old ... Or Just An Old Tyson? Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Fernando Vargas. Plus: Antonio Diaz, Sumya Anani, standing eight-count.

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Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Plus: Vitaly Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

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Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Plus: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Plus: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Plus: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win ... And Why. Color Pinup: Vitaly Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Plus: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Plus: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Plus: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Plus: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Plus: Clifford Etienne, over-hyped heavyweights.

Nov. 2000: Sugar Rush! Mosley Achieves Superstardom At Oscar's Expense. Color Pinup: Lennox Lewis. Interview: Jay Larkin. Plus: David Tua, Oleg Maskaev, Ben Tackie.

Dec. 2000: Mike Tyson vs. Lennox Lewis: 15 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Interview: Frank Maloney. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Bronco McKart, our heroes' heroes.

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Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Plus: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

April 2001: Lewis Is Too Much For Tua ... But Could Tyson Do Any Better? Interview: Max Kellerman. Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko.

June 2001: Trinidad-Jones: Superfight Or Mismatch? Interview: Virgil Hill. Plus: Mayweather-Corrales, Paul Ingle, Davey Hilton, Tyson's relationship with Vargas, Judah, and Mayweather.

Aug. 2001: Sugar Shane Mosley: Too Sweet For The Bad Boy Era? Interview: Richard Steele. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, Jesus Chavez.

Oct. 2001: Tito Power—From Fans To Foes ... Everyone's Feeling It! Interview: Lou DiBella. Plus: Hasim Rahman, Vargas-Rivera, F.I.S.T.

Dec. 2001: Laila Ali: The Fighter, The Sex Symbol ... The Future Of Women's Boxing? Interview: Laila Ali. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Tim Austin, Manny Pacquiao, Hector Camacho Jr.

Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story" Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Plus: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Plus: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

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PROGRESS REPORT:

THE 2000 U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM

By Kevin Iole

When historians look back at the 2000 U.S. Olympic team's performance in Sydney, it will be more as a warning to future athletes of what can go wrong than of a fond remembrance.

The United States had never gone into an Olympics with so much hope for so much hardware, only to come up with nothing but shattered dreams, excuses, and lost opportunities. But that's the sad story of the U.S. boxing squad at the Sydney Olympics.

For the first time since 1948, the United States failed to win a gold medal. Even more damning than that, however, was the fact that the U.S. only totaled four medals of any kind. Ricardo Williams and Rocky Juarez won silver medals, and Jermain Taylor and Clarence Vinson picked up bronzes. Other than that, the U.S. was embarrassed.

The word coming from the Americans in Sydney was that the U.S. boxers were more suited to the pro game than the amateurs. But after their first year as professionals, that theory has yet to be proven. Unhappily, judging by what's happened to them so far, there isn't a sure-fire superstar from the U.S. team, and there are only a handful who seem even capable of eventually winning an alphabet belt.

Here is an update on where they stand and, perhaps more importantly, where they might go (all records as of December 30, 2001):

JEFF LACY

Super middleweight Lacy, 6-0 (6), lost his third fight in the Olympics, but began his pro career so well that he's become one of the bright lights in Main Events' stable. He has, however, encountered a bit of bad luck. Two of his scheduled bouts dropped out on the day of the event, and he also suffered a hand injury that briefly stalled his advancement.

THE GOOD: Lacy is as powerful a puncher as there was in the 2000 Olympics and probably is as strong a puncher as there is in the 168-pound division. He is a superbly conditioned athlete with a chiseled body who seems to enjoy his craft and is willing to work hard to get better.

THE BAD: Lacy hasn't faced top-flight competition in the early going. Therefore, the question is how he will react when he hits someone and that someone is still standing afterward. Thus far, Lacy's opponents have collapsed like a card table when he's dealt his good stuff.

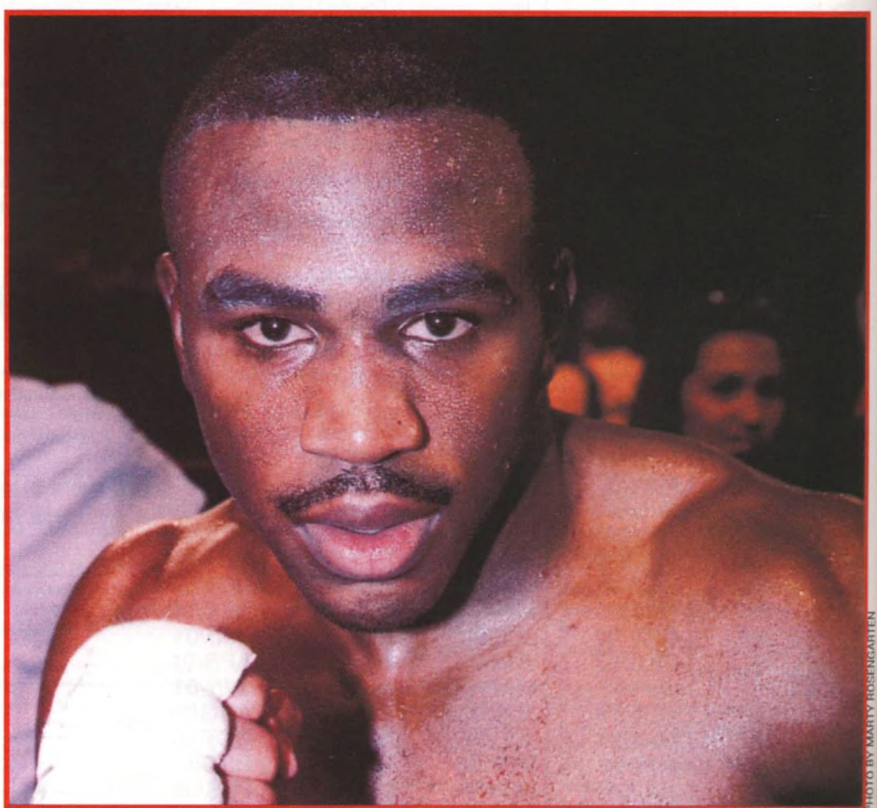


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Jeff Lacy is probably the best professional prospect to come from the 2000 U.S. Olympic boxing team. Punching power and conditioning are the super middleweight's greatest assets.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Junior welter Ricardo Williams is blessed with a ton of talent, but critics claim he's not as dedicated as he should be. Even so, to date he's outclassed his pro opposition with consummate ease.

THE OUTLOOK: It's bright. Lacy has the body to move up to light heavyweight and could breathe some much-needed life into that division. It's easy to see him winning an alphabet title on the basis of his power alone.

GRADE: B+

RICARDO WILLIAMS

Junior welterweight Williams, 5-0 (4) with 1 no-contest, was *the* big hope for gold in Sydney, but he only managed to bring home a silver medal. He was also originally expected to be the star of the highly touted stable of Olympians signed by Lou DiBella, but so far he certainly hasn't looked like the world-beater he was supposed to be.

THE GOOD: A southpaw, Williams is quick and agile and uses those abilities to move in and out, give his opponents angles, and create punching opportunities for himself. He puts his punches together well, but is not a one-punch banger by any stretch of the imagination.

THE BAD: Williams already has an entourage befitting a world champion, and according to sources close to his camp, he's not exactly in love with hard work. He also needed a bit of luck in keeping his record perfect, as the Ohio Athletic Commission overturned a technical draw, ruling it a no-contest. Surgery to correct a hole in his retina has temporarily slowed his progress.

THE OUTLOOK: There's way too much talent here to write him off, and providing he doesn't get too carried away with himself, some sort of title is probably a good bet for the future. But there's a lot a good fighters at 140 and 147 pounds, so Williams is far from a lock.

GRADE: B-

JERMAIN TAYLOR

Middleweight Taylor, 7-0 (5), has shown flashes of everything in his early bouts. He has displayed rib-rattling power and a potent left jab, and has the ability to dictate the pace of a fight.

THE GOOD: Like Lacy, Taylor will make a name for himself based on his ability to punch. He's a good athlete with an understanding of how to set up his punches. He also has a charismatic personality and a killer smile, which won't help him win fights, but could eventually help garner a large fan base.

THE BAD: When opponents run, like they will increasingly when Taylor's bazooka-like punches become more widely known, he has to cut off the ring. So far, he hasn't done that very well, but good coaching and experience should correct that problem.

THE OUTLOOK: Providing he's brought along at the right pace, a title shot

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Bronze medallist Jermain Taylor lands his potent left jab en route to a fifth-round TKO of Efrain Garcia. The charismatic Taylor still has a lot to learn about cutting off the ring when facing skillful movers.

should be forthcoming, but if Bernard Hopkins is still on the middleweight throne, Taylor won't be taking home THE RING belt afterward.

GRADE: B-

ROCKY JUAREZ

Featherweight Juarez, 6-0 (4), suffered a highly controversial defeat in the gold medal fight against Kazakhstan's Bekzat Sattarkhanov.

THE GOOD: A solid bodypuncher, Juarez' style seems ideally suited for the pro game. He knows how to fight in close and he delivers his punches like a seasoned pro, though his power is ordinary at best.

THE BAD: Juarez' style is difficult to turn into an attraction. Much of his best work is done at close range, which is often difficult for the crowds to see. He also has a tendency to coast at times, which will hurt him when he steps up the level of competition. He needs to be more consistent in his punch output, instead of following a burst of activity with periods where he follows an opponent around.

THE OUTLOOK: Juarez has a lot of the tools he needs to be a world-class fighter, but the 126-pound division has perhaps boxing's deepest talent pool. He's going to have trouble beating, say, Derrick Gainer, and can forget about the likes of Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, and Johnny Tapia.

GRADE: C+

JOSE NAVARRO

Junior bantamweight Navarro, 7-0 (2), has already gained a small measure of fame because another ex-Olympian, Oscar De La Hoya, manages him.

THE GOOD: He's a well-schooled boxer with lively legs, good moves, and the ability to put his punches together. He's also a serious young man who isn't likely to fall victim to the streets or other vices that have ruined so many fighters.

THE BAD: As his modest knockout percentage tells us, Navarro isn't much of a puncher, even at this stage of career against competition that had a combined record of 12-22. His chin isn't the greatest, either.

THE OUTLOOK: His affiliation with De La Hoya will help him navigate his way to a title shot, but a world championship is probably beyond his grasp.

GRADE: C+

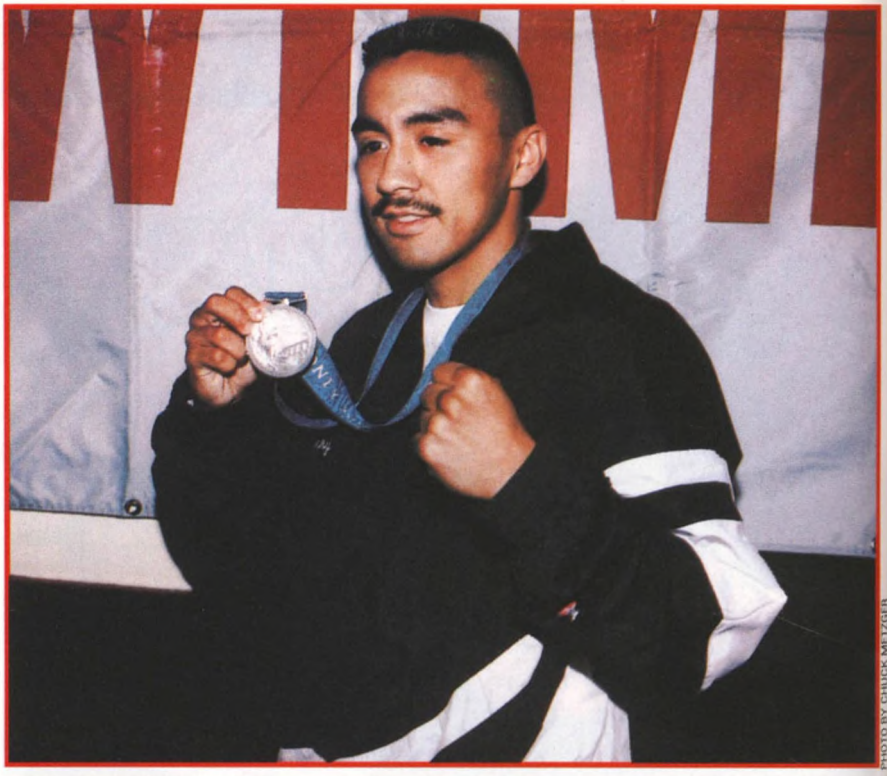


PHOTO BY CHUCK MILTZGER

Rocky Juarez shows off the silver medal he won at the Sydney Games. The featherweight has solid skills, but has a long way to go before he can compete with the best 126-pounders in the world.

THOSE FABULOUS FOREIGNERS

Even though the best pro prospects from the 2000 Olympics are from countries other than the United States, two of the finest are campaigning here—and there's already a potential superfight brewing between them.

Someday, perhaps in 2003 or '04, Francisco Bojado and Miguel Cotto could very well hook up in another Mexico vs. Puerto Rico war. They are the most exceptional of the non-Americans from the 2000 Olympic class and figure to accomplish the most by the time their careers are over.

Unless there's a hidden flaw, 19-year-old Mexican lightweight Bojado, 9-0 (9), is a superstar in the making. He's exceptionally quick, economical with his punches, and poised beyond his years. He's also good-looking, glib, and a murderous puncher. He hit Mauro Lucero with a shot that many thought missed. Lucero went down, writhing in pain, as the crowd booed, thinking he'd quit. It turned out that the left hook, which didn't even land flush, had broken Lucero's orbital bone.

Cotto, Bojado's Puerto Rican counterpart, will be shadowing Bojado throughout their careers. If Bojado is "1," then Cotto is "1A." Like Bojado, he is the whole package. He can move and box well, and sits down on his punches. The counterpunching Cotto, 6-0 (4), also has exceptional speed, reminiscent in many ways of "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather. Had he not been sidelined a few months following an auto accident, the buzz about Cotto would probably be as loud as the one surrounding Bojado.

There are also several other non-American Olympians worthy of note. Super middleweight Jerson Ravelo, 8-0 (5), has also been a pleasant surprise. He lost to Jeff Lacy in the U.S. Olympic

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Speed merchant Clarence Vinson shoots a right hand at Bryan Garcia during their four-round bout in Las Vegas in April, which the Olympic bronze medal winner won via decision. So far, bantamweight Vinson's pro career has been unremarkable.

BRIAN VILORIA

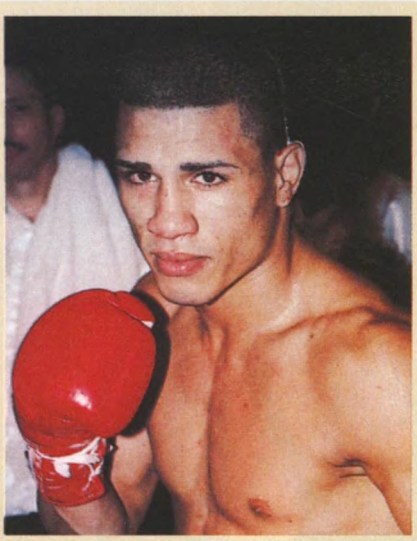
Flyweight Viloria, 4-0 (2), was a disappointment in the Olympics, got off to a relatively late start as a pro, but was gradually picking up steam as 2001 came to an end.

THE GOOD: Quick hands and feet are augmented by a solid punch (especially to the body), an aggressive attitude, and the willingness to work hard.

THE BAD: Viloria's not that difficult to hit. Also, he'll have trouble finding the right kind of opponents in the U.S., where quality flyweights are rare.

THE OUTLOOK: Hopefully, the hand he broke in his pro debut, which kept him out of action for six months, will not be a chronic problem, because Viloria should improve with regular work.

GRADE: C



Bojado and Cotto: A superfight for the future?

Trials, but then gained a birth on the Dominican Republic team, thanks to the fact that he holds dual citizenship. If Ravelo continues to progress, a big payday against Lacy could be forthcoming a year or two down the line.

And let's not forget Muhammad Abdullaev, 5-0 (4), from Uzbekistan, the man who beat Cotto and then Ricky Williams to win the gold medal in Sydney, and English heavyweight Audley Harrison, 3-0 (2), who won the super heavyweight gold medal. Both could be factors in their divisions this time next year.

—KI

CLARENCE VINSON

Bantamweight Vinson, 5-0 (2), is lightning quick and adept at making opponents miss. He seems comfortable in the ring and knows how to use every inch of it. He will likely wind up as a featherweight.

THE GOOD: Whenever you can make an opponent miss with regularity, as Vinson can, you have a shot at doing something good. Vinson is quicker than most guys he will face, and he knows how to translate that quickness into winning performances.

THE BAD: Vinson has not yet shown the ability to smoothly and consistently put combinations together, and many of his winging shots miss the target badly. And when he does connect, his blows don't seem to do much damage. He's also already suffered a number of cuts.

THE OUTLOOK: How far he goes depends on the improvements he makes.

GRADE: C

CALVIN BROCK

If heavyweight Brock, 8-0 (7), hits it rich, he will be one fighter who knows what to do with his money, since he is a college graduate and a former financial planner.

THE GOOD: Brock has kept a busy schedule of fights since turning pro, and showed maturity stopping veteran tough guy Rocky Gannon. He's intelligent enough to understand that he's far from a finished project and seems eager to keep working hard on his game.

THE BAD: He doesn't appear to

(Continued on page 70)

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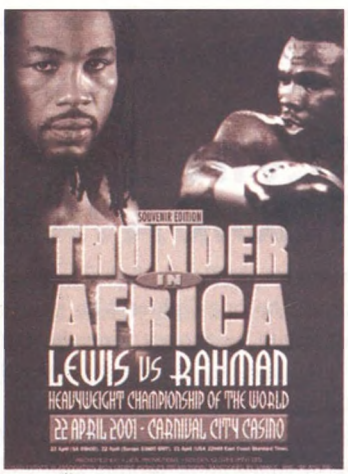

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2000 U.S. Olympic Team

(Continued from page 69)

have the quickness or power that today's heavyweights need to succeed at the highest level. He's pretty big, at 6'3", 235 pounds, but he needs to become physically stronger.

THE OUTLOOK: Eventual contender status is possible, but Brock doesn't appear to have the making of a world heavyweight champion.

GRADE: C

MICHAEL BENNETT

Cruiserweight Bennett, 6-2 (6), has a million-dollar body and a 10-cent chin, the latter of which has already led to a pair of TKO defeats as a pro.

THE GOOD: Bennett is an aggressive fighter who has good punching power.

THE BAD: He's easy to hit and he doesn't take punches well. The two guys who beat him, Wes Taylor and Drexie Frank James, aren't exactly Mike Tyson clones, so he can't claim he was overmatched. Bennett is also nearly 31, so he doesn't have much time.

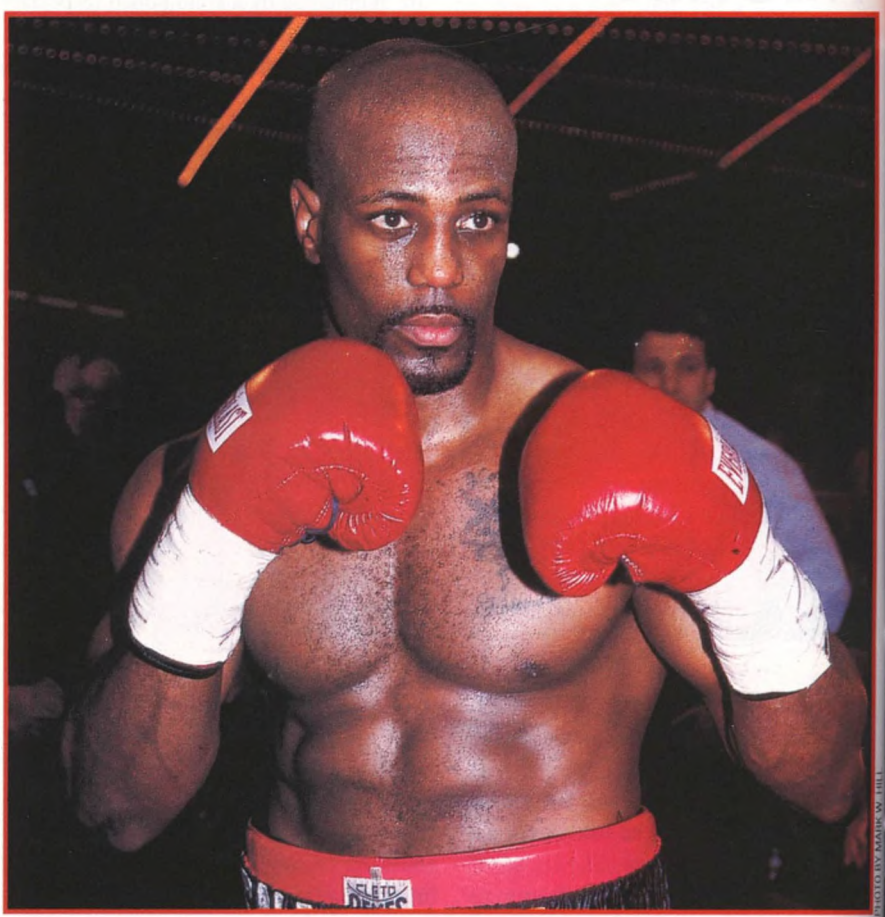
THE OUTLOOK: Grim. Despite his early losses, Bennett has opted to keep fighting. Look for him on *Heavyweight Explosion*.

GRADE: D

THE OTHERS

Welterweight **Dante Craig** is 4-1 (4), but has already been stopped and probably isn't going too far. Welterweight **David Jackson** hasn't fought since winning his pro debut in November '00, and light heavyweight **Olanda Anderson** hasn't even turned professional. ■

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a regular contributor to this magazine.



Cruiserweight Michael Bennett obviously has the body, but sadly lacks the chin to go with it. He's already been stopped twice in nine professional bouts.

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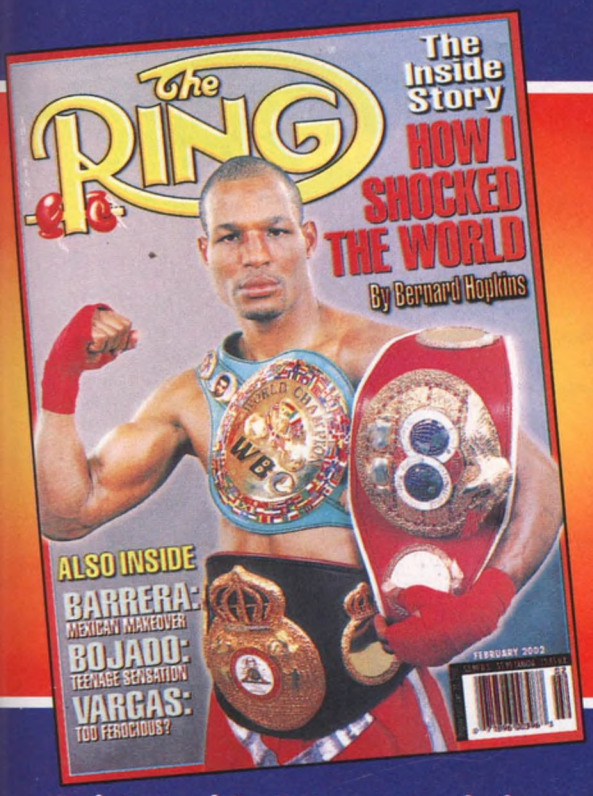

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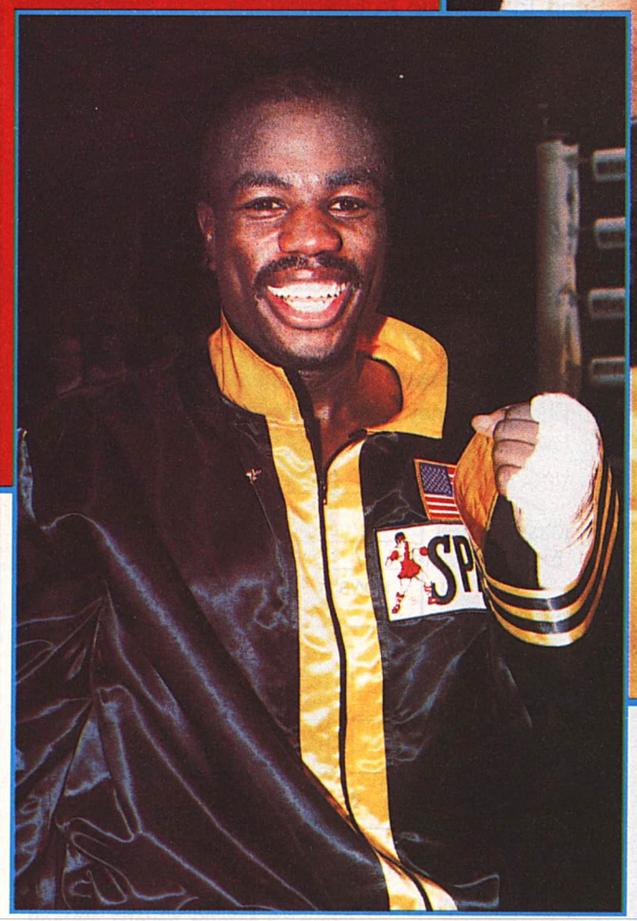
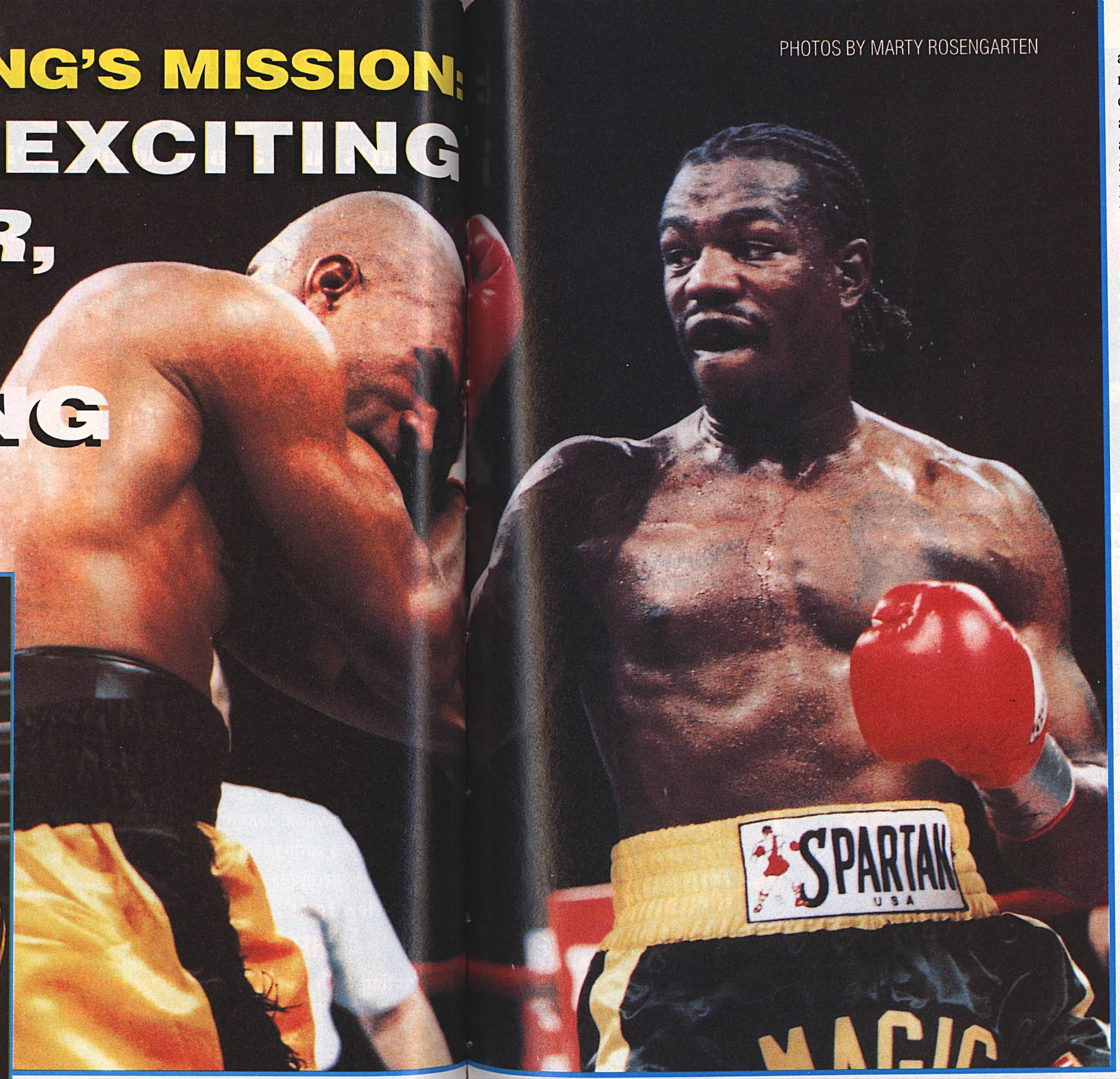
ERIC HARDING'S MISSION: A MORE EXCITING *CAREER*, A LESS EXCITING *LIFE*



These days Harding has plenty to smile about. With the help of boxing, the former street thug has turned his life around and is currently considered the one light heavyweight who just might have what it takes to beat Roy Jones.

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN



By Johnnie Whitehead

Light heavyweight contender Eric Harding would be the last to say that he's finally made it, because he's not world champion yet. But in many respects, he's already accomplished something far greater by turning his life around. Now, instead of plotting murder, Harding is trying to figure out a way to get Roy Jones back into a boxing ring with him. Today, instead of setting up drug deals and ducking the cops, he's attending PTA meetings and helping feed the hungry.

In his most recent outing, Harding delivered an outstanding performance, tallying a seventh-round stoppage of previously undefeated contender George Jones. It was the kind of showing that re-emphasized what many have suspected for some time now—that Harding is the greatest threat to knock Roy Jones off the light heavyweight throne he has occupied since 1996.

Dariusz Michalczewski, long considered the second-best fighter at 175 pounds, has been saying for years that he wants a piece of Jones, but has yet to budge from his pedestal in Germany to make it happen. With a 45-0 (35) record, Michalczewski has twice as many fights as Harding, 21-1-1 (7), and has notched more victories over name opposition. But he's nowhere near as crafty and as technically sound as Harding, and despite his glossy stats, Michalczewski is basically a pressure fighter with unproven whiskers who wins with strength more than skill.

"If Dariusz is as good as he thinks he is, why is he over in Germany fighting? Why ain't he eager to prove it?" asked Harding. "Everybody in the division wants to fight Roy for the money. I can't really say there's another light heavyweight out there who actually believes he can beat this guy."

Harding is the exception, and he's slowly winning converts to his cause. In the George Jones bout, he showed the one element of his game that has been missing for much of his career: power.

"He's always had power, but I had him flat-footed for the George Jones fight," said trainer Al Gavin, who has been working with Harding's long-time trainer, Howard Mosley, the past two years. "He broke Antonio Tarver's jaw, so that should be an indication that he can punch."

The thirst for combat comes as naturally to Harding as his will to survive.

"I wasn't born," he said. "I was bred like a dog. I was bred to fight."

The difficult part for Harding, however, was learning how to live. He was one of his north Philadelphia neighborhood's worst nightmares—young, twisted, and black, and he didn't give a flip about consequences.

"He was bad as hell," said the 53-year-old Mosley, who has been with Harding since the fighter was a young teen. "You know what, though? As bad as he was, he had goodness in his heart, too."

Many probably would've disputed that at one time. Kicked out of his mother's house at 15 for being disobedient, Harding traded in the schoolhouse for a crackhouse. A celebrity among local police, he

Always known for his slick boxing skills, Harding turned tiger in his December bout with George Jones. He made his previously unbeaten opponent miss, then countered with the kind of crowd-pleasing attack that had previously been absent from his game.

was known as "The Boss" because he always had a pocket full of money and a hostile attitude. Authorities became so frustrated with Harding that after he was shot in the leg and resisted telling the truth about who did it and why, they left him and refused to take him to the hospital.

Harding recalls being arrested 22 times, but was convicted only once, for which he received a nine-month jail stint. He was involved in drive-by shootings and shot twice himself. The way things were going, he was on the fast track to a lengthy prison confinement or an early grave.

The pivotal moment came early in Harding's boxing career. After turning pro in 1991 and fighting twice, he was inactive from September '91 until February '95. It was during the downtime that Harding seriously considered going down a road from which he could never turn back.

According to Harding, he had $40,000 of drug money stolen from his apartment, and he knew who was responsible. He called Mosley, who had no knowledge of what was going on, and offered him $200 to drive him and his brother to New York.

"I get down there and they started loading guns in my car," recalled Mosley. "I said, 'Back up, let's go inside.' They told me what happened. They were going to shoot up this guy's family. I told them, 'He knows where your mother and your family lives, so why can't he retaliate?' Y'all know you're doing wrong, and when you do wrong, you get hurt by it. You've got to let it go.'"

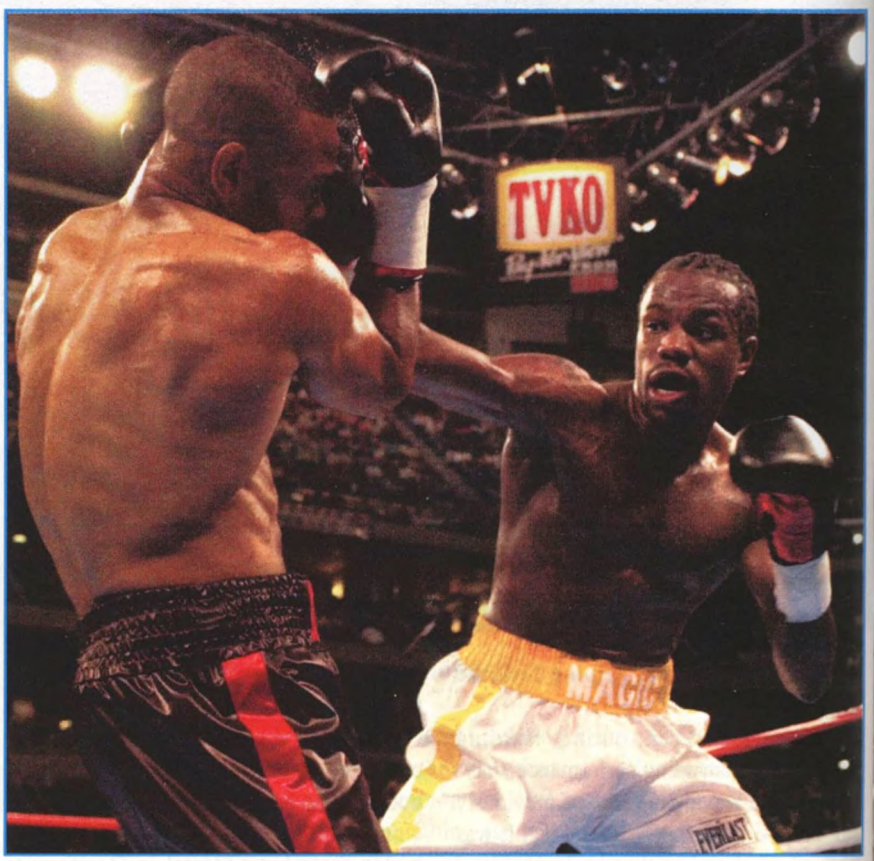
Fortunately, they did.

"Every man has to grow up in the world and have someone teach them the ins and outs of life," said Mosley.

Like most tales of transformation, the moment of clarity struck Harding when he least expected it. It came November 11, 1996. All of the wisdom Mosley had tried to instill in him finally clicked in what had been an empty space between his ears. A close friend lay in a hospital bed, clinging to life after being shot in the back of the head. He was young, like Harding. He was involved in that high-roller lifestyle, like Harding. And now he was helpless and blind.

"I said to myself, Look here, man, it's over. I'm tired of looking over my shoulder watching for the police and the guys around the corner," said Harding.

The next night, Harding went to Philadelphia's Blue Horizon, with some clothes and sneakers in tow. Mosley had arranged for him to move to Hartford, Connecticut, where he'd have a manager



In his only world title fight to date, southpaw Harding fought surprisingly well against Roy Jones, but was forced to withdraw at the end of the 10th round due to an injured biceps. Harding was out of action for the first half of 2001 while recovering from surgery.

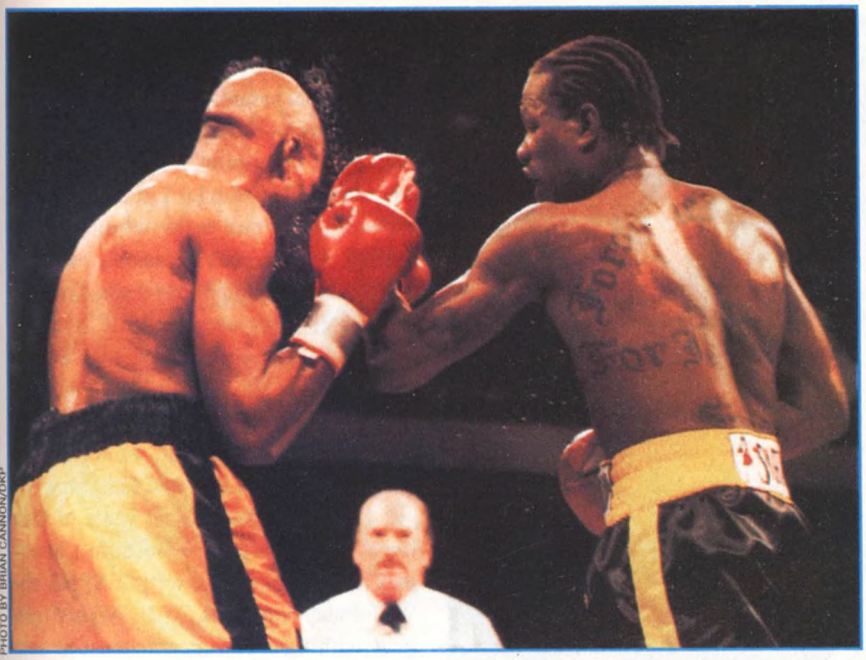


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Harding connects with a vicious left uppercut in the George Jones fight. The tattoo on Harding's back, which can be seen rather clearly here, says, "Forgive Me Father For I Have Sinned," and serves as a constant reminder of his crime-riddled past.

who'd subsidize his expenses so he could focus on boxing and get away from the lowlife element that had hindered his progress for so long.

"I had a bulletproof vest on and two .45 automatic pistols. I had to make sure nobody I was looking for was in there," Harding said of his arrival at the Blue that night. "I went to the bathroom, took my vest off, and gave both of my guns to one of my boys and told him, 'I don't need that anymore.' I haven't seen a gun since then."

Since that night at the Blue Horizon, Harding has done his old Philly neighborhood proud, including the elderly folk who used to despise him. He recently invited a busload of family and friends up to his home for a cookout. He speaks to school kids, helps feeds the homeless, and gives away toys for underprivileged kids at Christmas. After he upset former WBC light heavyweight titleholder Montell Griffin more than three years ago, the community was so proud of him, he was asked to speak at a Hartford prison.

"I told them if there are any cameras, I'm leaving right away," Harding said. "I don't do it for the publicity."

He offered any prisoner, upon release, to look him up at a local community center. He promised to help them get jobs and their GEDs. Three of those he spoke to actually showed up, and to this day Harding is still in contact with two of them who followed through.

"I'm not where I want to be, but I'm not where I once was," said the 29-year-old Harding. "Some people don't have enough sense to let it go. I do nothing illegal. I put the seat belt on when I drive. I've come way too far to do stupid things now."

Some men who use boxing to turn their lives around do fine until they lose an important fight, then, perhaps out of disappointment, they often revert to their old ways. Not Harding, who lost the biggest bout of his career in September 2000, when he was TKO'd by Roy Jones in the 10th round of their title bout. Perhaps the thing that kept Harding on the right path was the fact that he'd given the supposedly untouchable Jones a surprisingly competitive fight, despite suffering a torn left biceps that eventually forced

Instead of letting his man escape, as he has in the past, Harding jumped on George Jones and finished him off in the seventh round of their December bout on ESPN2.

Man on a mission: Harding speaks with* Friday Night Fights' *Teddy Atlas and Bob Papa following his knockout of George Jones. Atlas and Papa were among the many experts Harding impressed that night.

him to withdraw at the end of the 10th round. His showing opened lots of eyes and led some to wonder, *what if*?

Harding has yet to see the entire fight with Jones. So far he's only watched the second round to see how the freak biceps injury occurred.

"I took it well in front of the cameras, but when I got home I really thought about it, it didn't go over too well," said Harding. "I don't believe in moral victories. I either win or I lose. Whatever happens was meant to happen. I wasn't disciplined enough in between fights. I wasn't ready then."

After being on the shelf the first half of 2001 recovering from surgery in which his biceps had to be pulled down and sewed to the bone, Harding has approached this next phase of his career with renewed purpose.

His first comeback fight, a 10-round decision over Demetrius Jenkins in June '01, was a competent performance, but the George Jones fight was something to get excited about. In the sixth round, Jones was short-circuited by a straight left to the ear from his fellow southpaw and took a few more before the round ended. In the seventh, it was a lead left uppercut that got Jones wobbling and a perfect left cross that finished the job.

"I started out slow," explained Harding. "I like to let opponents get away with a few mistakes first, so they get comfortable with it. I picked it up in the fourth round, but I took off the fifth so he could get brave. Give him a little confidence so he can stand in front of me a little bit more. Then in the sixth, I added more power, and that was it for him."

When the crowd rose to its feet and cheered the beauty and brutality of what Harding had choreographed, it came as a pleasant change of pace for Mosley, who was critical of his charge for not scoring a knockout over Jenkins.

"He was always fighting safe and slick," said Mosley, who is a firm believer in not taking a punch to give one. "He's not scared. The guy will fight you. But he's used to letting guys ride instead of getting them outta there. I've always preached to this kid that you got to sell yourself. You got to be slick, but you got to punch back."

"I got myself in shape for the George Jones fight before I even went to camp," said Harding, who used to fight on just a couple of weeks notice and still win. "I was preparing myself for a spectacular win. That's what I'm working on every time out so people want to see me."

But boxing doesn't consume Harding's life. While he likes watching tapes of legends such as Salvador Sanchez to pick up a few moves, he's not a boxing junkie.

"I'm not a fan," he admitted. "This is a job for me. I don't look at rankings and things of that nature."

Though Harding admires middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins, who came from similar circumstances in Philadelphia and with whom he has sparred on numerous occasions, he didn't see Hopkins' triumph over Felix Trinidad. Instead, Harding uses the little free time he has to focus on his three sons and his daughter, ages six through 11. So much so that he was voted parent volunteer of the year at his sons' school, where he frequently volunteers to attend field trips.

"These are the critical years of their lives," said Harding, who didn't attend prefight interviews with ESPN2 the Wednesday before his *Friday Night Fights* bout with George Jones because it conflicted with a parent-teacher conference to pick up report cards. "Being a parent isn't always about being supportive financially."

It's not the attitude you expect from a former street criminal without a formal education. But Harding is obviously a changed man.

"My brother told me the night before I fought Roy Jones, 'You came a long way from being a neighborhood drug dealer to being shot to being ranked number one in the whole world.'"

And if Harding ever forgets who he was and where he's been, he has a tattoo the size of a billboard on his back that says, "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned," to remind him.

"I'm not what you call a religious person," said Harding. "I only go to church every now and then, but I don't get up there and preach. People who do it that way really don't look good. I know I need to atone for my sins and ask for forgiveness."

The familiar refrain from Harding is that he's "on a mission." After he knocked out George Jones, in the midst of his well-earned self-congratulatory chest thumps, he repeated those exact words. But if Harding doesn't achieve another thing in boxing, it won't be the end of the world, because the most important part of his mission has already been accomplished. ■

Johnnie Whitehead is an editor at USA Today and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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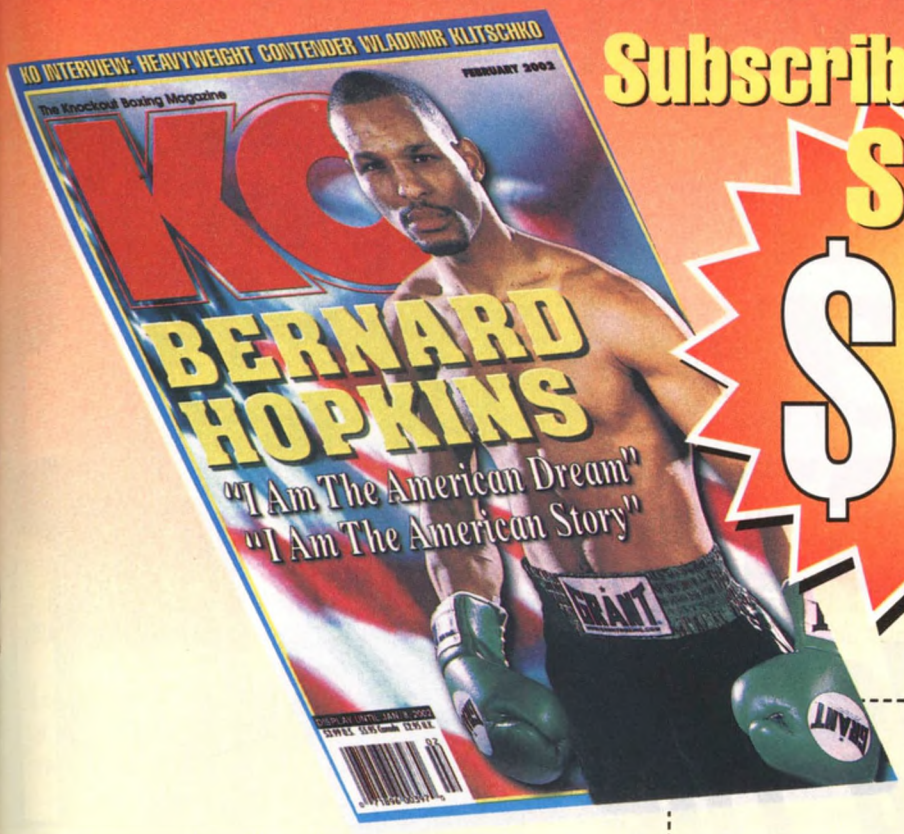

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1950s MIDDLEWEIGHT

EUGENE "SILENT" HAIRSTON

He Never Heard The Cheers Of The Crowd

By Robert Cassidy

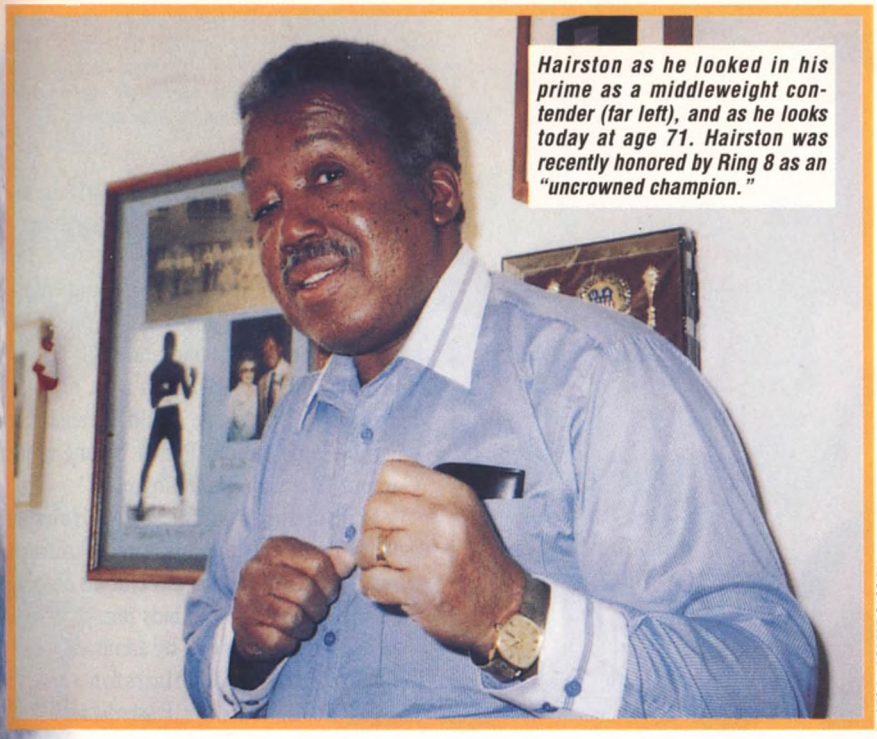
It has often been said that boxing is the most solitary of sports. The fighter isolates himself through roadwork or while shadowboxing with imaginary opponents. When the bell summons him to fight, he stands alone in the ring.

Eugene Hairston was perhaps more alone than most fighters.

Unable to hear or speak, he could never draw strength from words of encouragement or listen to instructions from his corner. In the trying moments that test all boxers during a fight, Hairston was alone with his thoughts, relying on his instincts and his courage to forge ahead.

He was good enough to become a world-rated middleweight in the early-1950s and was known as Eugene "Silent" Hairston, an action fighter with good power and a debilitating body attack. It was quite a journey for a man who, at the age of two, had lost his hearing and ability to speak after a bout with spinal meningitis.

Hairston pleased many crowds in his career, but never once heard them roar in appreciation. In December, the boxing crowd gathered in New York City to cheer



Hairston as he looked in his prime as a middleweight contender (far left), and as he looks today at age 71. Hairston was recently honored by Ring 8 as an "uncrowned champion."

PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

for him again when Ring 8, New York's Chapter of the Veteran Boxers Association, presented him with the organization's "Uncrowned Champion" belt.

"I could see the crowd and I could feel the crowd," he said of his fights. "I knew when it was good."

You could see by Hairston's smile that once again he knew it was good.

On two occasions, THE RING interviewed Hairston. In the first meeting he answered questions by exchanging handwritten notes, and the second time his sign language interpreter, Diane Smith, translated the answers. (His quotes throughout this article are a result of his written answers or Smith's translations.)

Hairston was born in Harlem, New York, and attended the School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on 23rd Street in Manhattan. He left school at the age of 15 to help support his family. He worked as a shoeshine boy and set up pins in a bowling alley. While still in his teens, he met Joe Louis, an idol he had seen fight on television. It was Louis who drew Hairston to boxing.

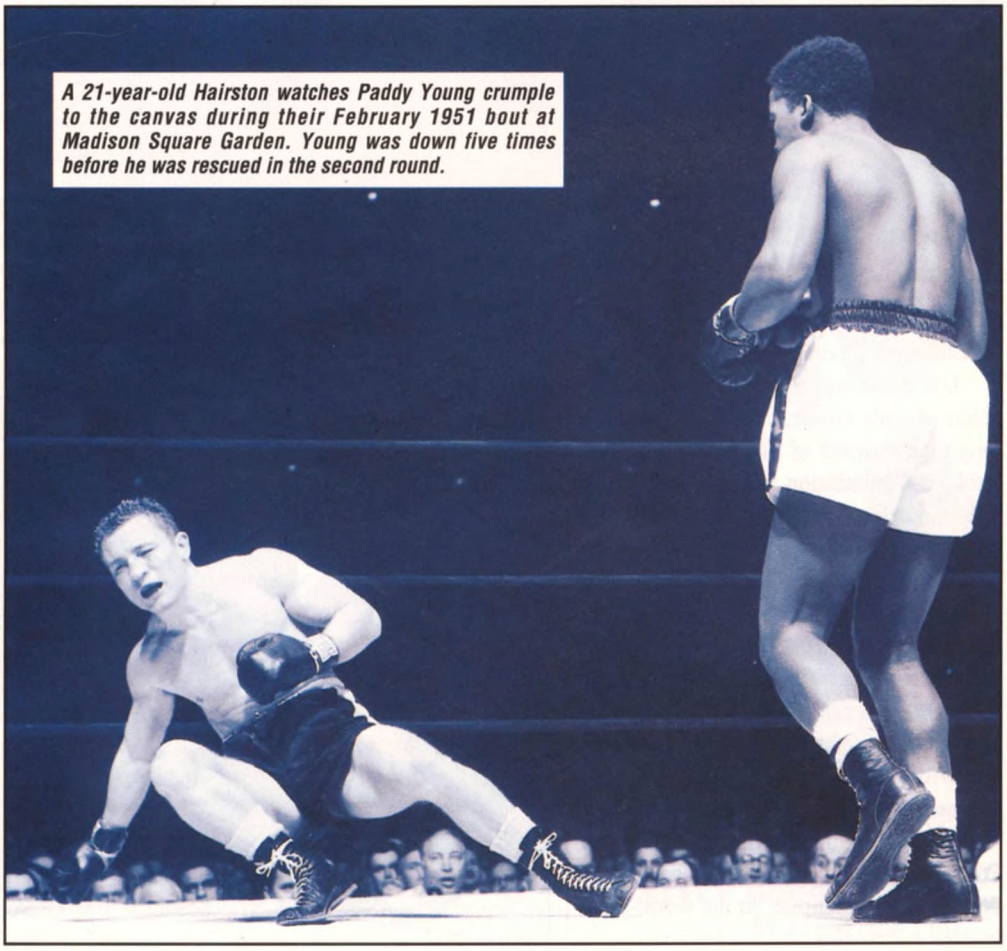
"When I was young, I was not sure about boxing, but I knew I must try. I tried hard and I succeeded," said Hairston. "No one ever tried to discourage me. My parents were a little afraid of me boxing, but when they realized I was good, they accepted it and they supported me."

Hairston learned general boxing techniques by watching other fighters train and was taught the intricacies of the game by the late Mike Miele, a man for whom Hairston still shows affection. Miele would slowly and deliberately demonstrate every movement and punch.

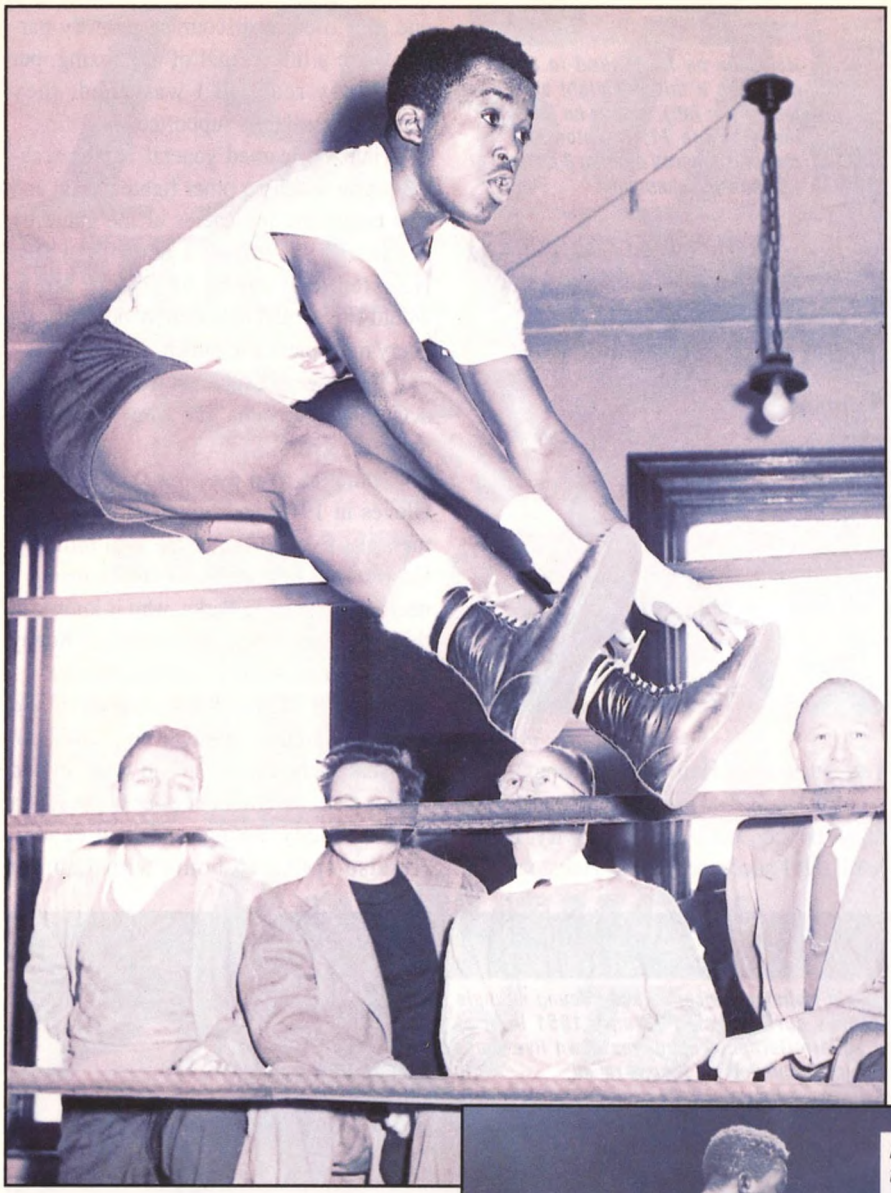
"He always explained things to me in acts," said Hairston. "He always played to me in the gym."

Hairston won the New York Golden Gloves in 1947, and turned pro that summer, just five days after his 17th birthday. He won his first 16 bouts before losing a decision to Tommy Parks, who is known in this era primarily as the trainer of Bobby Czyz, Charles Murray, and Ray Mercer.

In 1950, Hairston was stopped in two rounds by Johnny Bratton, but closed out the year with wins over Kid Gavilan and Lester Felton. The next year he beat Art Towne, Paddy Young, and Paul Pender. He also split two bouts with Laurent



A 21-year-old Hairston watches Paddy Young crumple to the canvas during their February 1951 bout at Madison Square Garden. Young was down five times before he was rescued in the second round.



Hairston shows off his agility at the gym. As he was unable to hear or speak, his trainer had to act out all the moves he wanted to teach the boxer. Nobody knows for sure whether or not Hairston's disability hampered his career.

"Nobody knows how good Hairston could have been or if his hearing made a difference in how he fought," said Joe Miceli, who shares four common opponents with Hairston and was a world-rated welterweight in the same era. "But he was a helluva fighter. I give him a lot of credit for getting as far as he could. I remember when he knocked out Paddy Young at the Garden. That was something else."

With a shrug and a smile, Hairston deflects the notion that his accomplishments are any more heroic than those of his contemporaries. His modesty forbids him to indulge in the fuss made over him by admirers.

"I trained hard," Hairston said. "I fought hard. I didn't feel different. I enjoyed my entire boxing career."

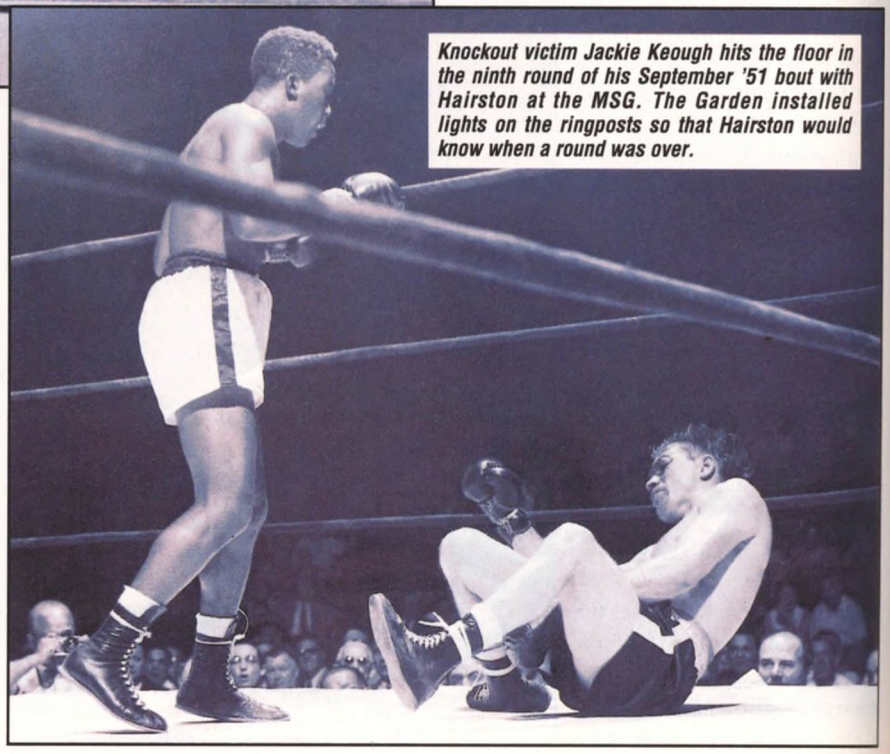
Hairston and Jake LaMotta were familiar sparring mates at Gleason's Gym when it was still a Bronx institution. They met for real twice in 1952. The first bout, on March 5, was a 10-round draw at Olympia Stadium in Detroit. The rematch, two months later at the same venue, was won by LaMotta.

Joey Archer, another Gleason's Gym alumni who twice challenged for the middleweight title in the '60s, studied Hairston's Dauthuille during that campaign and lost a rematch with Gavilan.

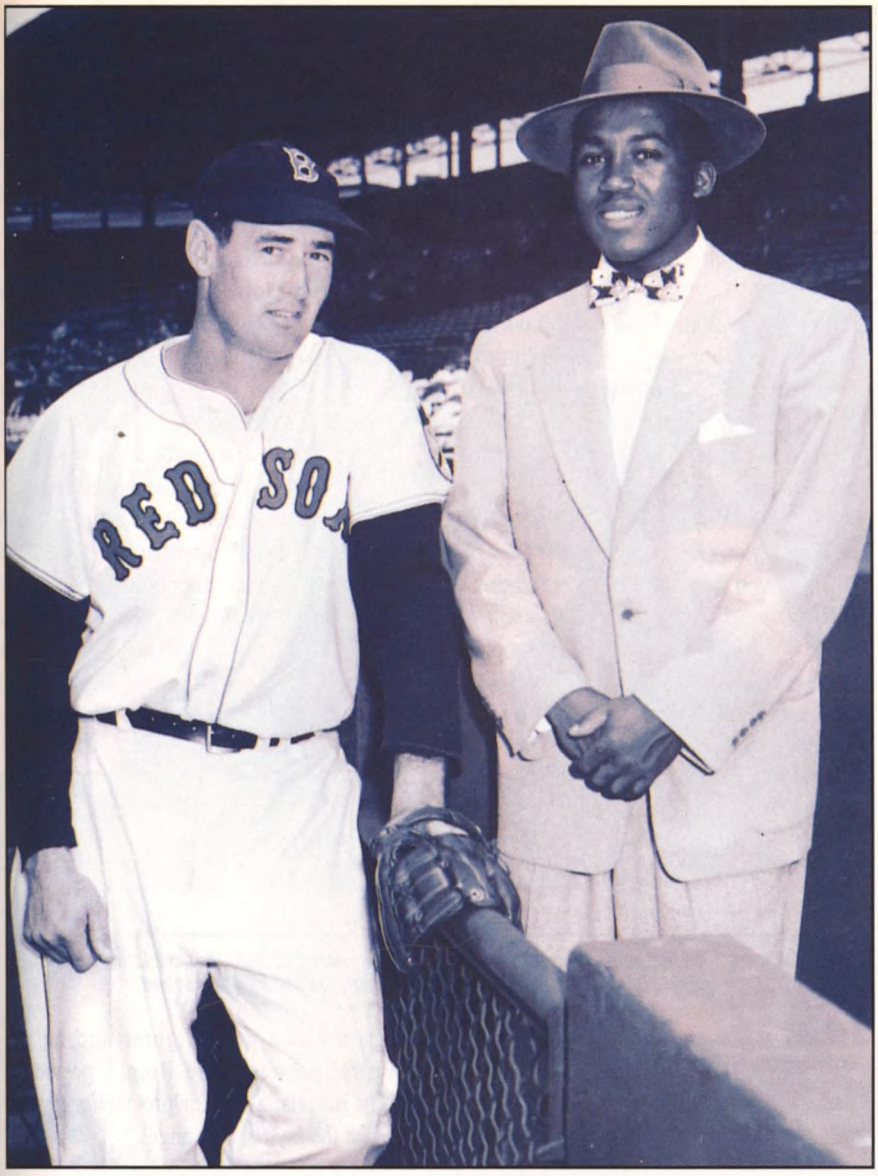
Upon introducing Hairston at the recent awards dinner, Tony Mazzarella, a long-time member of the New York State Athletic Commission who presented him with the belt, asked the audience to try to put themselves in Hairston's boxing boots.

"It was hard enough fighting guys like Johnny Bratton, Kid Gavilan, and Jake LaMotta," said Mazzarella. "Imagine fighting them and not being able to hear or speak. Imagine not being able to communicate with your trainer, the referee, anyone."

While hearing-impaired athletes have succeeded in other sports—most recently major league baseball player Curtis Pride—Hairston is one of only a handful of deaf boxers to compete on the world-class level.



Knockout victim Jackie Keough hits the floor in the ninth round of his September '51 bout with Hairston at the MSG. The Garden installed lights on the ringposts so that Hairston would know when a round was over.



One slugger meets another: Hairston poses with baseball great Ted Williams at Boston's Fenway Park. Hairston beat future middleweight champion Paul Pender in Boston in 1951.

moves when he was still a teenager.

"I learned from watching guys like Eugene Hairston in the gym," said Archer. "I saw his draw against LaMotta and I thought he won it."

When asked about the draw with Hall of Famer LaMotta, Hairston simply wrote, "rob, cheat." LaMotta remembers the fight differently.

"We fought toward the end of my career," said LaMotta. "He was lucky to get a draw. I should have beaten him. I came back and beat him in the next fight."

Although protective of his own pride and ring record, LaMotta acknowledged that Hairston was indeed a talent.

"He rated in the top 10," said LaMotta. "The kid fought some good fighters. I can't say anything bad about him. He did okay considering what he was up against. Someone told me he could feel the vibrations of the bell, that's how he knew the round ended."

While people with hearing disabilities do rely on vibrations, Hairston relied on the referee to signify the end of a round. When he became a contender, Madison Square Garden installed red lights on each corner post. Today they blink in the final seconds of the round, but they were initially put in place to alert Hairston when a round had ended.

A short time after losing to LaMotta, Hairston met Bobo Olson and was stopped in the sixth round. He said a headbutt caused his right eye to swell so badly that it closed. The eye never healed properly.

(Continued on page 82)

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Eugene Hairston

(Continued from page 81)

Hairston would fight one more time, traveling to Paris to meet contender Charley Humez. He lost a 10-round decision and sustained a cut and more swelling to his right eye. The injury led to his retirement.

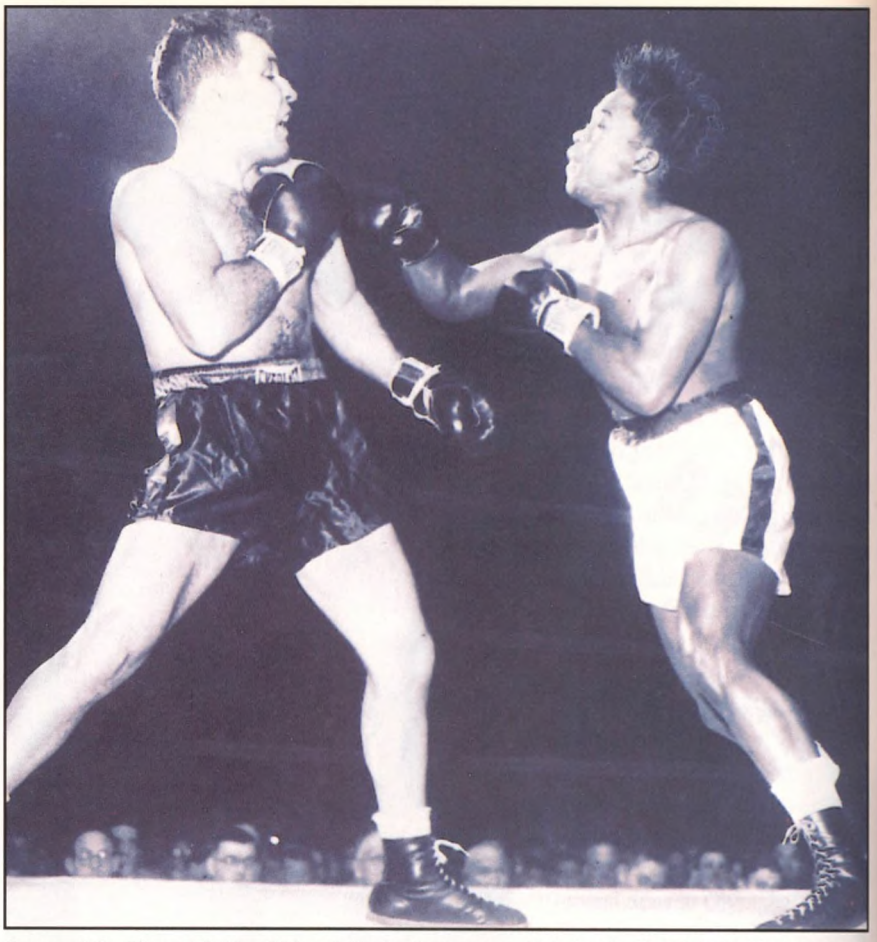
"I was told that if I continued to fight I could go blind," said Hairston.

Today, Hairston's right eyelid droops and it seems to affect his vision.

"I can see," he said. "I have vision. But it's weak."

That is as close as Hairston comes to complaining about anything. Usually a simple nod from a fan will make him smile. Although he cannot speak with them, he gladly signs autographs and poses for pictures.

Hairston, 45-13-5 (24), beat numerous contenders and two world champions in his six-year career. But a shot at the world title always remained just beyond his grasp. Today, he does not display a trace of bitterness. Even though he was forced into retirement, leaving behind an incomplete career, the 71-year-old fighter carries himself with the contentment of a man who has lived a complete life.



In one of the biggest fights of his relatively short career, Hairston battled Jake LaMotta to a 10-round draw. Even today, Hairston, who never got a title shot, claims he was robbed.

Hairston and well-regarded Frenchman Robert Villemain slug it out in their crowd-pleasing 1952 battle in Detroit. The 10-rounder would end in a draw.

"He was a great fighter and he's a beautiful person," said Ring 8 president Bobby Bartels, a former pro welterweight. "He has the heart of an angel."

Upon his retirement from boxing, Hairston worked for UPS for many years. It was also after boxing that he met his wife, Aline, who is also deaf, at a wedding in Canada.

"She asked me for an autograph, and I asked her for her phone number," said Hairston. "The rest is history."

The couple danced that evening at the wedding, and still make it a point to dance whenever they can. They dance to the vibrations of the music. Aline, who worked as a gift-wrapper at the Lord & Taylor department store in Manhattan, is retired. So is Hairston, who still gives motivational lectures to children who are deaf.

The Hairstons have been married for 27 years and live in a modestly furnished apartment on Roosevelt Island, a small stretch of high rises that sits on the East River between the boroughs of Manhattan and Queens.

Although he was inducted into the

American Athletic Association for the Deaf Hall of Fame in 1974, Hairston seemed to disappear from public view after his career. That is easy to do when one is unable to communicate with most of the world.

"Most deaf people are fine, they don't feel that they are handicapped," said Smith. "It's not a problem for the Hairstons. They have friends who are deaf and they socialize with them. You can't just sit there and say, 'Woe is me.' The Hairstons don't."

Some friends, though, feel the Hairstons are more cut off from the outside world because they usually don't have an interpreter with them. They also do not own a Text Telephone, a device used by deaf people that allows a caller to speak to an operator, who then relays a typed message to the hearing-impaired party.

"Nothing ever really bothers Eugene," said Smith. "He's just a very kind and sweet man."

Smith said that Hairston was very touched and overwhelmed by the reception he received at the Ring 8 dinner. When the fighter was asked if he had any regrets, he said that he did not. But his hands moved quickly, signing a footnote to his last statement.

"I would have liked to have fought for the middleweight championship. I could have been champion."

He paused again, perhaps envisioning the dream of fighting for the title at the Garden, and said, "Ray Robinson wouldn't fight me because he hates it in his stomach."

Then, to emphasize the point, Hairston smiled, made a tight fist and pounded his own stomach.

No translation was necessary. ■

Robert Cassidy is a writer for Newsday and a regular contributor to this magazine.

In July 1952, Hairston stopped Billy Kilgore in the sixth round for the last victory of his career. An eye injury, suffered in a bout with Bobo Olson, forced Hairston to retire from the ring at the end of the year.

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New Face

(Continued from page 16)

Though he's on the small side by today's heavyweight standards, Williamson hits just as hard as some of the biggest, most powerful fighters out there.

"Williamson definitely has power, and that's the main thing," *USA Today* boxing writer Dan Rafael said. "That's what you want to see from a heavyweight. He has a huge right hand. He's 33, and if he's going to do something, he better do it quickly. I'm sure he wants to step up his level of competition. His handlers are keeping him real busy.

"He's an exciting guy, but with his great power comes a very suspect chin. However, a lot of heavyweights have suspect chins, which makes them interesting. The biggest drawback I have with DaVarryl is that it's hard to see him at age 33 as a heavyweight champion. But he can give fans exciting fights the next few years."

Williamson began boxing when he was 25, and delayed becoming a pro so he could finish up his education. He has no regrets about his choice, and he is not about to let age deter him from his goal.

"I'm not that old, I'm eager," Williamson said. "You have some people with Kushner who might say I'm too eager. But I believe in my talent. Remember, I was an Olympic alternate in 1996 with Zab Judah. I consider myself a veteran. I'm on an accelerated pace toward a heavyweight title. The method behind the madness of my promotional team is easing me along in six- and eight-round fights."

Playing pro football or basketball was Williamson's original athletic dream. He was a three-year starter at quarterback for Theodore Roosevelt High, leading his team to a public school city title his sophomore year. He started his senior year for the basketball team, but was getting more attention from colleges for his football skills.

Iowa and West Virginia recruited Williamson, but he wound up at Rochester Community College to get his academics in order to enter a Division I program. Instead, Williamson wound up at a Division II school, Wayne State College in Nebraska. It turned out to be a bad choice. For the first time in his life, Williamson watched from the bench. As an option quarterback, Williamson didn't fit into the Wayne State pocket-passer system, and in Williamson's opinion, that prevented him from getting the kind of playing time he deserved.

Still, Williamson stayed in the program and graduated with a degree in recreation. He went on to attain his master's degree at Northern Michigan University in Marquette, Michigan, while training for the Olympic team.

Ironically, it was Williamson's ardent desire to play football that led him to boxing. He was 25 and working out in Scottsdale, Arizona, preparing for a tryout with the Indianapolis Colts, when he became intrigued by a T-shirt advertising a local boxing gym on a guy he saw in a laundromat.

"I walked into the gym and told the coach there that if I had any talent to tell me, and if I didn't have any talent, to let me know, too," Williamson recalled. "I picked up boxing and caught on to it.

"I'm 33 years old, and I've tried other things. I've tried football, basketball, I ran track, I've tried the theater, and I've tried comedy. Now I'm trying boxing. I wouldn't say I failed in those other things, I was just looking for something I could succeed in."

Williamson is certainly working hard toward that aim with boxing. He's averaging almost a fight a month in his first two years as a pro. In fact, Williamson is so willing, his rapid climb is creating problems for Eric Bottjer, one of Kushner's matchmakers. Bottjer would like to develop Williamson like any other fighter, except that Williamson is knocking out opponents too quickly to build any experience.

"To his detriment, DaVarryl keeps knocking guys out that he shouldn't be," Bottjer said. "I say that sarcastically because I'm trying to get guys who will go the rounds with him, so he gets more experience. To me, DaVarryl is a still a blank slate. He is talented, but has to develop savvy. He hasn't shown the savvy yet, and it's our fault; we haven't found the guys who will take him the rounds.

"DaVarryl wants to fight all of the time, and he has a delightful personality. He has definite goals, which is good. Initially, it was all about the money, but then he started talking about how often he would fight, who he would fight, if he would fight on TV. Now he's concerned with getting better.

"DaVarryl wants to be on a very fast track because of his age and amateur expe-

rience, and I understand that, but he has to understand that the professional game is a lot different. Being a three-round fighter for 10 years doesn't translate to becoming an eight- and 10-round fighter. He punches very hard with both hands. My concerns with him are his defense and his stamina. He hasn't shown a lack of stamina, but he's only been four rounds once."

Williamson picked up a wealth of experience as a sparring partner in the camp of former heavyweight champ Hasim Rahman, while "The Rock" was preparing for his rematch against Lennox Lewis.

And Rahman was seated ringside when Williamson scored a quality victory with his third-round knockout of Andre Kopilov, who entered the fight 8-1 (4), on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*, on November 16, the night before the Rahman-Lewis rematch.

"DaVarryl has all of the skills that it takes to be very good, and he's still learning," Rahman said. "DaVarryl listens, and he believes in his power and believes he can go all of the way, and that's half the battle. He definitely helped me prepare for Lennox, with his jab, with his uppercut. DaVarryl is a very smart guy, who can change his style. Some days he can come in and bang, and some days he can come in and just box. He's smart enough to adapt at any given time."

The Kopilov victory kicked off an interesting evening for Williamson. Later that night, on the same card, Bennett suffered his second pro loss, losing by first-round knockout in his eighth pro bout. It was sweet redemption for Williamson, who had lost to Bennett in the 2000 Olympic Trials in what Williamson feels was a bad decision.

Williamson didn't forget.

"Bennett took all of my money," Williamson said. "That was $200,000 or $300,000 I lost. I lost to Bennett on a decision, and I still knocked him down in the first round of the finals, I just didn't have the energy to finish him. Now I have to make my money the hard way."

While it seems Bennett's career is heading toward a premature finish, Williamson is still fighting, still progressing. He's drawn more to the sounds that fill his days now—the positive waves of applause. ■

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

John Ruiz D 12 Evander Holyfield
(Retains WBA Title)
David Tua KO 9 Garing Lane
Vitali Klitschko KO 11 Ross Puritty
Cliff Etienne KO 2 Dan Ward
Michael Moorer KO 4 Terry Porter
Danny Williams KO 2 Shawn Robinson
Robert Davis W 10 Frankie Swindell
Vaughn Bean KO 1 Kenny Craven
Cliff Couser KO 2 James Johnson
Tommy Martin KO 9 Craig Tomlinson
Nate Jones KO 4 Drexie Frank James
Faruq Saleem W 10 Melvin Foster
Robert Wiggins KO 10 Eric Kirkland
Kali Meehan KO 8 Colin Wilson
Ricky Womack W 10 Willie Chapman
Pele Reid KO 3 Derek McCafferty
Wade Lewis KO 3 John Dixon
Butterbean W 4 Kevin Tallon

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Fabrice Tiozzo KO 3 Tiwon Taylor
Michael Nunn KO 5 Matthew Charleston
Sebastian Rothmann KO 8 Crawford Ashley
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk KO 10
Vincenzo Rossitto
Michael Simms KO 3 Ali Sanchez

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Bruno Girard KO 11 Robert Koon
(Wins Vacant WBA Title)
Dariusz Michalczewski KO 11
Richard Hall
Eric Harding KO 7 George Jones
Derrick Harmon W 12 Demetrius Jenkins
Thomas Ulrich W 8 Joe Siluvangi
Etianne Whitaker W 12 Greg Wright
Charles Lee W 10 Ka-Dy King
Troy Ross W 4 Dan Sheehan

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Antwun Echols W Disq. 5
Lawrence Chapman
Robin Reid W 12 Julio Cesar Vasquez
David Starie KO 1 Paul Wesley
Vinny Paz W 10 Levan Easley
Mario Veit KO 4 Talal Santyago
Sam Hill W 4 Larry Kenny

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

British heavyweight Danny Williams blows out Shawn Robinson

Jerry Elliott W 10 Commando Kalekuzi
Brian Magee KO 1 Ramon Britez
Jurgen Brahmer KO 2 Mike Coker
Rick Thornberry KO 4 Norm Graham

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Erland Betare KO 4 Joseph Sarkody
Victor Fessetchko W 10 Darren Dorrington
Peter Manfredo W 4 John Lennox Lewis
Miguel Espino KO 4 Ishwar Amador
Evelyn Rodriguez W 4 Freeda Foreman

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Kassim Ouma KO 4 Pedro Ortega
Oba Carr W 10 Alejandro Jimenez
Kevin Kelly D 10 Nobuhiro Ishida
Julian Holland KO 6 Alberto MaChong
Santiago Samaniego KO 4 Hector Quiroz
Paolo Pizzamiglio W 6 Francesco Cioffi
Akira Ohigashi Tech. Draw 8 Kookyul Song
Jimmy Vincent W 10 Ojay Abrahams
Dante Craig KO 1 Jerome McLean

WELTERWEIGHTS

Omar Weis D 10 Ray Oliveira
Cory Spinks W 8 Charles Ward
Joseph Makaringe KO 6 Peter Malinga
Neil Sinclair KO 5 Harry Dhami
Ossie Duran W 10 Delroy Mellis
Julian Romero W 8 Daniel Mendez
Matthew Hatton W 6 Dafydd Carlin

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Ricky Hatton KO 2 Justin Rowsell
Diobelys Hurtado KO 1 Henry Cokes
Giuseppe Lauri W 10 Massimo Bertozzi
Masakazu Satake KO 12 Hironari Oshima
Stephen Smith W 12 Victor Hugo Paz
Michael Stewart KO 2 Quincy Pratt
Mikhail Krivolapov W 6 Takhir Rzaev
Alan Bosworth KO 7 Daniel James
Demetrius Hopkins W 6 Ike Ezeji

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Dairo Esalas KO 4 Fray Luis Sierra
Aldo Rios W 10 Alberto Sicurella
Daniel Alicea W 8 Bernard Harris
Steve Murray KO 4 Jason Hall
Gary St. Clair KO 10 Kongthawat Ritti
Regilio Tuur KO 2 Shawn Simmons
Juan Garza KO 4 Heriberto Cabrera
Gary Balletto KO 4 John Trigg
Carl Johanneson W 6 Angel Rios
Paul Malignaggi W 4 Jose LaPorte

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Yodsanan Nanthachai KO 4 Walter Rodriguez
Miguel Casillas W 12 Javier Jauregui

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

IBF bantam titlist Tim Austin slips in the 12th round against Ratanachai Vorapin

Randy Suico KO 1 Jun Longakit
Marco Perez KO 2 Dustin Kim

FEATHERWEIGHTS

John Michael Johnson KO 1 Augie Sanchez
Istvan Kovacs W 8 Jose Alfonso Rodriguez
Eiichi Sugama KO 10 Momotaro Kitajima

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Oscar Larios W 12 Ivan Alvarez
Enrique Sanchez W 10
Jose Alfredo Jimenez
Arnel Barotillo W 10 Manabu Fukushima
Somsak Sithchachawan KO 3
Mike Domingo
Youngin Cho KO 1 Akihiro Kanai
Turcay Kaya W 12 Vincenzo Gigliotti
Oupa Lubisi KO 8 Innocent Mthalane
Shingo Sasaki KO 1 Khunchit Kiatgeija

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Tim Austin W 12 Ratanachai Vorapin
(Retains IBF Title)
Heriberto Ruiz W 8 Victor Rabanales
David Guerault KO 6 Daniel Kodjo Fassou
Abner Cordero W 12 Joel Junio
Katsushige Kawashima KO 4
Singhdam Kiatwisak
Knight Alexander W 10
Ryuichi Minoriyama

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Alexander Munoz KO 3 Hernan Berrio
Yokthai Sithoar W 10 Frank Eraham
Diego Morales KO 5 Terry Evans
Hidenobu Honda W 10
Wenpetch Chuwatana
Joel Avila W 12 Jhunver Halog
Eiji Kojima KO 7 Keunshik Lee

FLYWEIGHTS

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 2
Luis Lazarte
(Retains WBC Title)
Lorenzo Parra KO 11
Jose de Jesus Lopez
Shingo Yamaguchi W 10
Keisuke Yokoyama
Kazuo Okada KO 3 San Sithnaruepol

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Pichit C. Siriwat W 10 Rey Tarasona
Melchor Cob Castro KO 5 Jose Chable
Tatsuo Hayashida W 12 Pilkoo Kang
Mikiza Myekini W 12 Vuyisile Bebe
Jose Jimenez KO 6 Wilmer Jinete
Rodel Mayol KO 1 Billy Payla
Sod Skindiew Gym W 10
June Maximbot

STRAWWEIGHTS

Chana Porpaoin W 10 Julius Escobar
Noel Arambulet W 10 Alfonzo De La Hoz
Daniel Reyes KO 2 Ever Bolanos
Isaac Bustos W 12 Fernando Luna
Sankalek Sor Ekaring W 10
Rolando Tuyogon

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The RING

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

Many people consider Wladimir Klitschko the real number-one contender to the heavyweight throne, but there are a few knocks on the Ukrainian giant, most notably the way he has avoided fighting any big, dangerous, heavy-hitting opponents on his way to the top. The same can not be said of Jameel "Big Time" McCline.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

McCline took on two of the biggest, most dangerous heavyweights in the world in 2001, and prevailed twice, over Michael Grant and, most recently, Lance "GOOFi" Whitaker. The 6'8", 250-pound Whitaker was drawing comparisons to George Foreman with his effortless punching power, but the 6'6", 260-pound McCline wasn't afraid to step in with him and find out who stood taller. McCline, just a journeyman-type prior to his breakout 2001 campaign, outworked and outfought his heavily favored opponent from the start, and after nearly knocking GOOFi totally daffy in the 10th round, he went on to win by unanimous 12-round decision.

Now, thanks to McCline exposing a couple of the pretenders, there are only two 6'6"-plus behemoths left among the heavyweight division's top 10 contenders. So if Klitschko wants to prove conclusively that he deserves a shot at the big time, the obvious move is to give Big Time a shot at him.

• • • •

Jameel McCline

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Tim Austin W 12 Ratanachai Vorapin

Ledyard, Connecticut: After fighting on TV just once a year for the first three years of his title reign, IBF bantam boss Austin made some major strides in 2001, defending three times on television and scoring impressive kayoes in the first two of those bouts. The third time, however, against tough but limited Vorapin on the Evander Holyfield-John Ruiz III undercard, Austin failed to deliver a knockout, and instead slowed his momentum with an efficient but uninspiring, safety-first decision win.

The jab was the key for the stringy southpaw titlist from Cincinnati, Ohio. When he pumped his lead right with regularity, the shorter challenger couldn't get his punches off. But when Austin forgot to use the jab, Vorapin, also a southpaw, was able to get some work done and win a few rounds. THE RING gave him four rounds, scoring the bout 116-111, and the ringside judges awarded him anywhere from two to five rounds. Glenn Feldman (USA) had it 115-112, George Smith (USA) saw it 117-110, and Robert Paolino (USA) scored the fight 118-109, all for Austin, who was making his eighth title defense.

Austin, 118, made his power known in the second round, when he staggered Vorapin, 118, with a combination. But the 30-year-old challenger from Thailand came back in the third, getting inside when Austin eschewed the jab and scoring well to the body. "The Cincinnati Kid" stepped up his jabbing in the fourth and fifth and also began delivering some quick left hands behind the jabs. He widened his lead when Vorapin lost a point in the sixth for a low blow, after referee Michael Ortega (USA) had already warned him twice.

Austin, also 30, boxed magnificently in the seventh, jabbing to the head and body, countering beautifully, and keeping Vorapin at just the right distance. But just when it seemed Vorapin, 40-6 (28), was becoming discouraged, the feisty Thailander had a big ninth round, landing a combination to the body, a right-left to the jaw, and then his best punch of the fight, a clean right hook to the chin.

Austin's jab took over again in the 10th, and in the 11th he landed his best shot of the evening, a beautiful left uppercut. The 12th was all Vorapin, however, as Austin sat on his lead, ran around the ring, and looked a little too much like a guy trying not to lose. Austin, 24-0-1 (21), can only hope that in winning so unspectacularly, he didn't lose ground in his campaign to become as well-paid an attraction as his talents suggest he should be.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Don King Productions
(12-15-01)
Eric Raskin

Sven Ottke KO 10 Anthony Mundine

Dortmund, Germany: Unbeaten challenger Mundine, 167½, Sydney, Australia, tried his best to rile Ottke, 167½, Magdeburg, Germany, during the build-up, but succeeded only in firing up the IBF super middleweight titlist for one of his few stoppage victories. Ottke needed it, too. Former rugby player Mundine looked on his way to possibly pulling off an upset before 6,500 fans jumped to their feet in the Westfalen Halle to acclaim Ottke's 12th title defense.

He has now surpassed former IBF light heavyweight king Henry Maske's total of 11 successful defenses to become Germany's most accomplished titlist ever. Rarely has the former Olympic gold medallist, however, had to pull a fight out of the fire as he did here. The inexperienced Mundine, 10-1 (8), boxed as confidently as he predicted he would and had the champion down before Ottke clinched victory with a one-punch knockout no one thought him capable of.

Ottke, 34, had previously stopped just four opponents in 24 fights. He started cautiously enough, Mundine's alert footwork and tight defense seemingly confusing him in the beginning. Ottke tried to pressure his opponent into more commitment, but Mundine, 26, contented himself with good use of his jab before he landed the first telling punch of the fight, a right hand in the fourth round that momentarily shook the German. A headbutt at the end of the round, however, determined to be intentional by American referee Wayne Kelly, cost the challenger two points, denying him a round he would have won.

At the start of the fifth, a sharp right by Mundine dropped Ottke, 25-0 (5), and the Australian continued to land significantly

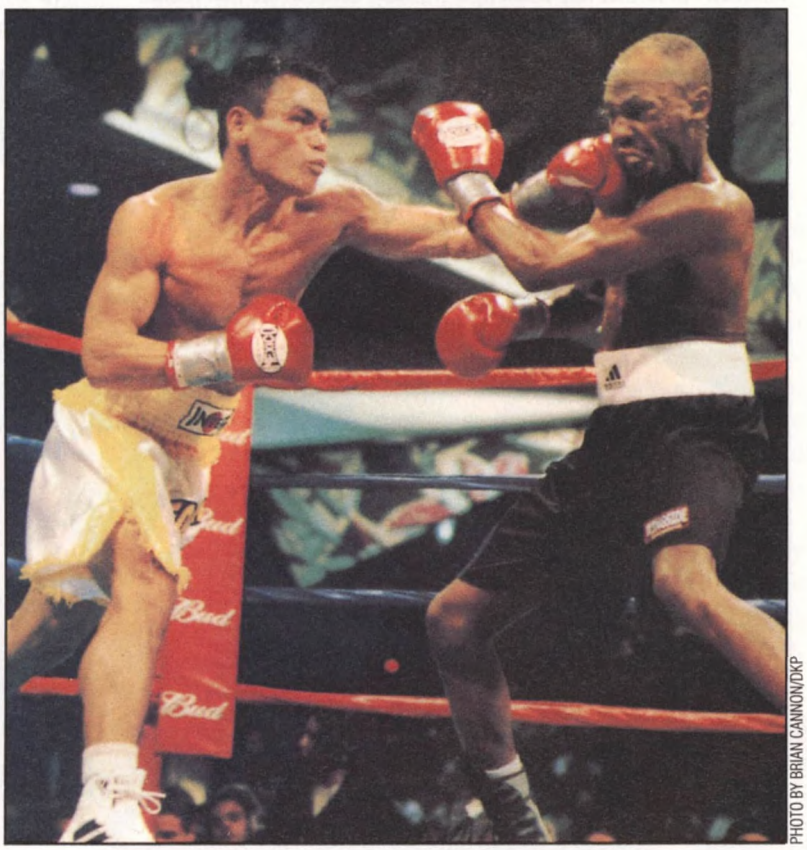

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Austin absorbs a hard left hand on his way to decisioning Vorapin

while Ottke was unable to impose himself to the extent he wanted to, causing him clear frustration. He did better in the sixth, but Mundine continued to look the more dangerous puncher and claimed the ninth round in such overwhelming fashion it was impossible to predict the dramatic and conclusive intervention of Ottke's right hand in the 10th.

Ottke started quickly with sharp shots and got home with several combinations before the right hand connected solidly with Mundine's temple. The challenger fell flat on his back and did not move as the referee issued the 10-count at 2:40 of the round. When it really mattered, Ottke, of all people, was able to land a home-run punch.

Promoter: Wilfried Sauerland

(12-1-01)

Brian Doogan

Jameel McCline W 12 Lance Whitaker

New York, New York: Forget whatever Whitaker, Granada Hills, California, and his new manager, Rock Newman, were trying to sell with all the hype about the large heavyweight changing his name to "GOOFi." There was nothing remotely goofy about the imposing 251-pound Whitaker, 30, a burgeoning force whom followers of the heavyweight division were taking very seriously.

That is until Whitaker faced someone his own size in McCline, Port Jefferson, New York. The 31-year-old former sparring partner of Lennox Lewis took a major step toward the heavyweight title picture with his 12-round, unanimous-decision victory over Whitaker, 23-2 (19), at the cavernous Javits Convention Center in Manhattan. It capped a great 2001 for McCline, 27-2-3 (16), who registered a similarly stunning win earlier in the year when he knocked out former title challenger Michael Grant in the first round.

Whitaker came into the fight with all the hype focused on him. The 6'8" behemoth was coming off a pair of knockout victories over Robert Davis and Oleg Maskaev, and McCline, 261, was supposed to be another small hurdle in Whitaker's climb up the heavyweight ladder.

"Big Time," however, had other plans.

"I know all of the hype was surrounding him, but I faced that situation before with Grant, and look what happened to him," McCline said. "I knew if I stuck with my jab and game plan that I would be in good shape."

In the early rounds, Big Time connected with his jab, stayed on his toes, and averted any danger by sidestepping and countering Whitaker's rushes. While McCline was outboxing GOOFi in taking the early rounds, Whitaker seemed content to pace himself.

Sensing the fight slipping away, Whitaker picked up his work rate in the sixth, drawing the fight closer on the scorecards over the next few rounds. By the ninth, both fighters were fatigued, but McCline found a burst of energy to land the most telling blow of the fight in the 10th, a right to Whitaker's temple that caused the big man to stumble backward. McCline could not finish off the massive Whitaker, but the near-knockdown and subsequent barrage were enough for judges Don Ackerman (USA) and Steve Weisfeld (USA) to give McCline a two-point margin.

It turned out McCline needed the extra point on Ackerman's card, which favored Big Time by just 114-113, while Melvina Lathan (USA) and Weisfeld had it more slanted toward McCline, at 116-112 and 115-112, respectively. THE RING had it 116-112 for McCline. Steve Smoger (USA) was the referee.

Television: HBO

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Promotions

(12-1-01)

Joe Santoliquito

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

McCline pounds the heavily hyped Whitaker

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Oquendo pumps his jab against listless Izon

Fres Oquendo KO 3 David Izon

New York, New York: For once, Oquendo, Chicago, Illinois, came into a fight against a name opponent as the favorite. "The Big O" was a late replacement for Wladimir Klitschko, taking the fight on Thanksgiving Day with only nine days notice. Though considered small for a heavyweight, the 222-pound Oquendo, 28, illustrated once again that he could be a force in the division by blowing out the shopworn Izon, 33, in three rounds at the Javits Convention Center.

Izon, 228, hardly produced anything in the way of offense. Oquendo, 22-0 (13), pelted Izon, Pensacola, Florida, with jabs in the opening round. The Big O dropped down a few times, landing clean blows to the body, while the 14-month layoff from the ring obviously affected Izon, 27-4 (23). He missed wildly with lead rights, and could hardly keep the pressing Oquendo away.

In the second round, it was more of the same: Oquendo attacking and breaking Izon's defense with the jab, then connecting with an array of punches, hitting Izon with overhand rights, uppercuts, and left hooks.

Oquendo took a calculated approach early in the third, again working behind the jab. Izon tried firing back in vain, as Oquendo kept walking him down. As the middle of the round approached, Oquendo couldn't help but hit Izon with his looping overhand right. As the end of the round neared, Oquendo exploded, rushing Izon and forcing him back into a corner. He was crushing Izon under a hail of punches when referee Michael Ortega (USA) stepped in and waved a halt to the fight at the 2:54 mark of the third.

"This was big for me," Oquendo said after the fight. "I got an opportunity to show my skills against someone respected like Izon. This should get me a big fight. I'll take on anyone. They can put me in with Klitschko, John Ruiz, I don't care."

Television: HBO

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Promotions

(12-1-01)

Joe Santoliquito

Eric Lucas KO 8 Dingaan Thobela

Montreal, Quebec: The bloom came completely off "The Rose of Soweto" at the Molson Center when former WBC super middleweight titlist Thobela showed up for his challenge of new beltholder Lucas hideously out of shape, and gave a horrid effort en route to being stopped at 2:15 of the eighth. Formerly a titleholder at 135 pounds, the 5'7" Thobela initially came in two pounds over the 168-pound limit at the weigh-in. And though he successfully made weight on his second attempt, his gut spilled ominously over the waistband of his trunks on fight night, a disgraceful way to enter any bout, much less a title bout.

Thobela hurt not only himself, but also Lucas, whose victory rang hollow because of the soft opposition. Lucas sported the same online casino advertisement on his back that Bernard Hopkins wore when he beat Felix Trinidad, and he was similarly dominant, but the win proved very little.

From the outset, Lucas, 167½, St. Julie, Quebec, focused on the ample body of Thobela, 168, Soweto, South Africa. The 30-year-old titlist, making his first defense, was moving well and ripping off crisp combinations to the belly, and though there were no CompuBox statistics for this fight, he seemed to be out-throwing the challenger by about a 5-1 ratio.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE

Lucas' first WBC title defense was an easy one

In the fourth, Lucas began to focus more on the head, sneaking in quick, straight rights, while Thobela, 35, would load up for counter right hands and miss repeatedly. In the sixth, Thobela finally came alive with a series of aggressive combinations, but the burst lasted only a few seconds, and soon Lucas was back in control, banging the South African's body along the ropes. The only damage Thobela inflicted all fight came via a head clash in the middle of the sixth that left Lucas with a cut over his left eye. In compliance with the WBC's recently reinstated and always ridiculous accidental headbutt rule, referee Laurence Cole (USA) took a point from Thobela, but he was so far behind, it really didn't matter.

After taking a pasting in the seventh, Thobela, 40-9-2 (26), opened the eighth with another brief offensive flurry, but midway through the round, Lucas staggered him with a hook to the head. A followup right hand nearly made The Rose of Soweto wilt, and after a quick, eight-punch salvo by Lucas, 34-4-3 (13), Cole jumped in and called for a timely stoppage.

Next up for Lucas may be popular veteran Vinny Paz, who will be trying for his 50th career victory. A March 1 date was being discussed as of press time.

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Interbox

(11-30-01)

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 2 Luis Lazarte

Pattaya, Thailand: Crisp-punching Thai lefty Pongsaklek, 112, very easily defended the WBC flyweight belt for the third time (and the second time in 41 days) as he pressed the action from the start, floored Argentine Lazarte, 108½, with a short but stunning left, and was awarded a TKO win with the loser's corner tossing in the towel at 2:43 of the second round.

The fight itself was shorter than the Argentine national anthem, which is the longest one in the world. In the first round, the 24-year-old Pongsaklek, 43-2 (24), applied immediate pressure, throwing plenty of right-left combinations at the much shorter challenger to win the round on all three scorecards.

The second round saw the Thai land a well-timed short left, dropping the 30-year-old Lazarte, 19-5-1 (7), on the deck. After the flash knockdown, Lazarte's corner surprisingly threw in the towel, forcing referee David Chung (Korea) to terminate the fight in disappointly quick fashion.

The bout took place at Ambassador City Jomtien Hotel as part of the 39th WBC Convention, but the quick surrender gave a feeling of indigestion to some 350 delegates from all over the world.

Promoter: Diamond Promotions

(12-6-01)

Joe Koizumi ■

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Lazarte was way out of his depth against Pongsaklek

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★ Willie Pep
★ "Marvelous" Marvin Hagler
★ Ken Norton
★ Virgil Hill
★ David Reid
★ Michael Carbajal
★ Kid Gavilan
★ Bernard Hopkins
★ Floyd Patterson
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The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS

(Ratings as of November 2001)

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: John Ruiz (USA)
1. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
2. Evander Holyfield (USA)
3. Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)
4. Mike Tyson (USA)
5. Fres Oquendo (PR)
6. Nicolay Valouev (RUS)
7. Oliver McCall (USA)
8. Jameel McCline (USA)
9. Larry Donald (USA)
10. Hasim Rahman (USA)
11. Chris Byrd (USA)
12. Vaughn Bean (USA)\

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Champ: Virgil Hill (USA)
1. Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
2. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
3. James Toney (USA)
4. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
5. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
6. O'Neil Bell (USA)
7. Ezra Sellers (USA)
8. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
9. Luis Pineda (PAN)
10. Jorge Castro (ARG)
11. Dale Brown (CAN)
12. Louis Azille (DR)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS

Super Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Lou Del Valle (USA)
2. Bruno Girard (FRA)
3. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
4. Clinton Woods (GB)
5. Reggie Johnson (USA)
6. Robert Koon (USA)
7. Antonio Tarver (USA)
8. Mads Larsen (DEN)
9. David Telesco (USA)
10. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
11. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
12. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Byron Mitchell (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)
3. Thomas Tate (USA)
4. David Starie (GB)
5. Dana Rosenblatt (USA)
6. Julio Cesar Green (DR)
7. Manuel Siaca (PR)
8. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
9. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
10. Omar Sheika (USA)
11. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
12. Danilo Haussler (GER)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Super Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
Champ: William Joppy (USA)
1. Felix Trinidad (PR)
2. Howard Eastman (GB)
3. Keith Holmes (USA)
4. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
5. Darren Obah (AUSTRL)
6. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
7. Ryan Rhodes (GB)
8. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
9. Sam Hill (USA)
10. David Reid (USA)
11. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
12. Erland Betare (FRA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Fernando Vargas (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
3. Ike Quartey (GHA)
4. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
5. Jose Flores (MEX)
6. Frank Olsen (DEN)
7. J.C. Candelo (COL)
8. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
9. Kevin Kelly (USA)
10. Travis Simms (USA)
11. Michael Rask (DEN)
12. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)

WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Andrew Lewis (GUY)
1. Ricardo Mayorga (CR)
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Michael Trabant (GERE)
4. Chantel Stanciel (USA)
5. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
6. James Page (USA)
7. Jose Rivera (USA)
8. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
9. Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)
10. Danny Perez (USA)
11. Arturo Gatti (USA)
12. Frederic Klose (FRA)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS

Super Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Hector Camacho Jr (PR)
2. Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)
3. Randall Bailey (USA)
4. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
5. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
6. Ricky Hatton (GB)
7. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
8. Demetrio Ceballos (PAN)
9. Terronn Millett (USA)
10. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
11. Antonio Diaz (USA)
12. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Champ: Raul Balbi (ARG)
1. Vacant
2. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
3. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
4. Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)
5. Miguel Callist (PAN)
6. Sandro Casamonica (ITA)
7. Angel Manfredy (USA)
8. Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)
9. Alex Trujillo (PR)
10. Juan Lazcano (USA)
11. Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)
12. Rick Yoshimura (JAP)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS

Champ: Joel Casamayor (CUB)
1. Lakva Sim (MON)
2. Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
3. Lamont Pearson (USA)
4. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
5. Jongkwon Baek (KOR)
6. Michael Gomez (GB)
7. Kinji Amano (JAP)
8. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
9. Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)
10. Carlos Hernandez (SAL)
11. Silvano Usini (ITA)
12. Roberto Garcia (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Champ: Derrick Gainer (USA)
1. Daniel Seda (PR)
2. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
3. Naseem Hamed (GB)
4. Victor Polo (COL)
5. Philip Ndou (SA)
6. Lewis Woods (US)
7. Johnny Tapia (USA)
8. Istvan Kovacs (HUN)
9. Antonio Cermeno (VEN)
10. Injin Chi (KOR)
11. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
12. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Yober Ortega (VEN)
1. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
2. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
3. Walter Estrada (COL)
4. Israel Vasquez (MEX)
5. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
6. Osamu Sato (JAP)
7. Vincenzo Gigliotti (ITA)
8. Johnny Armour (GB)
9. Michael Brodie (GB)
10. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
11. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
12. Jose Rojas (VEN)

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Champ: Eidy Moya (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Leo Gamez (VEN)
3. Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
4. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
5. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
6. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
7. Adan Vargas (MEX)
8. Mark Johnson (USA)
9. Diego Morales (MEX)
10. Genaro Garcia (USA)
11. Spend Abazi (DEN)
12. Noriaki Naka (JAP)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Celes Kobayashi (JAP)
1. Alexander Munoz (VEN)
2. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
3. Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)
4. Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)
5. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
6. Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)
7. Adonis Rivas (NIC)
8. Jesus Rojas (VEN)
9. Katsushigo Kawashima (JAP)
10. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
11. Luis Bolanos (COL)
12. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)

FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Eric Morel (USA)
1. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
2. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
3. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
4. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
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9. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
10. Jose Carita Lopez (PR)
11. Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)
12. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS

Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
2. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
3. Yura Dima (MON)
4. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
5. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
6. Deeden Kengkarun (THAI)
7. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
8. Masibulele Makepula (SA)
9. Keisuke Yokoyama (JAP)
10. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
11. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
12. Pilkoo Kang (KOR)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS

Champ: Vacant
1. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
2. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
3. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
4. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
5. Jose Garcia (COL)
6. Kim Ki Hwan (KOR)
7. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
8. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
9. Daniel Reyes (COL)
10. Khulile Makeba (SA)
11. Alex Sanchez (PR)
12. Jairo Arango (PAN)

WBC RATINGS

(Ratings as of December 2001)

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Mike Tyson (USA)
2. Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)
3. Hasim Rahman (USA)
4. Fres Oquendo (USA)
5. Oliver McCall (USA)
6. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
7. Chris Byrd (USA)
8. Vaughn Bean (USA)
9. Larry Donald (USA)
10. Michael Moorer (USA)
11. Clifford Etienne (USA)
12. Jameel McCline (USA)
13. Lance Whitaker (USA)
14. David Tua (NZ)
15. Danny Williams (GB)
16. Ray Mercer (USA)
17. Monte Barrett (USA)
18. Brian Nielsen (DEN)
19. Henry Akinwande (GB)
20. Francois Botha (SA)
21. Lamon Brewster (USA)
22. Obed Sullivan (USA)
23. Faruq Saleem (USA)
24. Luan Krasniqi (GER)
25. Shannon Briggs (USA)
26. Timo Hoffman (GER)
27. Nicolay Valouev (RUS)
28. George Kandelaki (GEO)
29. Joe Mesi (USA)
30. Peter Okhello (UGA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Champ: Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)
1. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
2. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
5. Carlos Cruzat (CHI)
6. Louis Azille (DR)
7. Dale Brown (CAN)
8. Sebastiaan Rothmann (SA)
9. Bruce Scott (GB)
10. Arthur Williams (USA)
11. Turan Bagci (TUR)
12. Ramon Garbey (USA)
13. Ezra Sellars (USA)
14. Carl Thompson (GB)
15. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
16. Rudiger May (GER)
17. Jason Robinson (USA)
18. Jean-Marc Mormeck (FRA)
19. Adolpho Washington (USA)
20. Alain Simon (FRA)
21. Roman Kovalchuk (UKR)
22. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
23. Mohamed Ben Guesmia (ALG)
24. Robert Norton (GB)
25. William Guthrie (USA)
26. Frederic Serrat (FRA)
27. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
28. Hector Avila (ARG)
29. Sione Asipeli (TON)
30. Michael Rodgers (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS

Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Clinton Woods (GB)
2. Reggie Johnson (USA)
3. Yawe Davis (ITA)
4. Antonio Tarver (USA)
5. Mads Larsen (DEN)
6. Eric Harding (USA)
7. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
8. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
9. Michael Nunn (USA)
10. Bruno Girard (FRA)
11. Lou Del Valle (USA)
12. Montell Griffin (USA)
13. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
14. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
15. Derrick Harmon (USA)
16. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
17. Robert Koon (USA)
18. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
19. Jabrial Jabrialov (RUS)
20. Lincoln Carter (USA)
21. Chris Johnson (CAN)
22. Silvio Branco (ITA)
23. Sergio Baez (ARG)
24. Mario Tonus (ITA)
25. Juan Nelongo (SPA)
26. Stipe Drews (CRO)
27. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
28. Arturo Rivera (MEX)
29. George Jones (USA)
30. Sean Fitzgerald (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Eric Lucas (CAN)
1. Markus Beyer (GER)
2. David Starie (GB)
3. Thomas Tate (USA)
4. Danilo Haussler (GER)
5. Glenn Catley (GB)
6. Dingaan Thobela (SA)
7. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
8. Antwun Echols (USA)
9. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
10. Omar Sheika (USA)
11. Jurgen Brahmer (GER)
12. Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)
13. Henry Porras (CR)
14. Charles Brewer (USA)
15. Ramon Britez (ARG)
16. David Reid (USA)
17. Mehdi Sanoune (FRA)
18. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
19. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
20. Yoshinori Nishizawa (JAP)
21. Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)
22. Omar Gonzalez (ARG)
23. Vinny Pazienza (USA)
24. Dan Batchelder (USA)
25. Robin Reid (GB)
26. Mario Veit (GER)
27. James Lubwana (UGA)
28. Sidney Msutu (SA)
29. Kippy Warren (USA)
30. Jeff Lacy (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Erland Betare (FRA)
2. Felix Trinidad (PR)
3. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
4. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
5. Keith Holmes (USA)
6. Carl Daniels (USA)
7. Naotaka Hozumi (JAP)
8. Antonio Perugino (ITA)
9. Aaron Davis (USA)
10. Raymond Joval (HOL)
11. Travis Simms (USA)
12. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
13. Kevin Palmer (USA)
14. Robert Allen (USA)
15. Evans Ashira (KEN)
16. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
17. Aaron Mitchell (USA)
18. Raul Marquez (USA)
19. Dwain Williams (USA)
20. Jose Clavero (ARG)
21. Marlon Hayes (USA)
22. Alejandro Berrio (COL)
23. Lansana Djallo (BEL)
24. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
25. Ryan Rhodes (GB)
26. Lawrence Chapman (USA)
27. Andres Galfi (HUN)
28. Stephan Trabant (GER)
29. Satoki Suzuki (JAP)
30. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
1. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
2. Francisco Castillejo (SPA)
3. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
4. J.C. Candelo (COL)
5. Bronco McKart (USA)
6. Yory Boy Campas (MEX)
7. Kirino Garcia (MEX)
8. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
9. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
10. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
11. Alex Bunema (USA)
12. Richard Williams (GB)
13. Paolo Pizzamiglio (ITA)
14. Steve Roberts (GB)
15. Kassim Ouma (USA)
16. Christophe Canclaux (FRA)
17. Frank Olsen (DEN)
18. Alfred Ankamah (GHA)
19. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
20. Michael Rask (DEN)
21. Sergei Dzindziruk (UKR)
22. Wayne Alexander (GB)
23. Adrian Stone (GB)
24. Jason Papillion (USA)
25. Elvis Guerrero (PAN)
26. Wilfredo Rivera (PR)
27. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
28. Anthony Farnell (GB)
29. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
30. Francisco Mora (ARG)

WELTERWEIGHTS

Champ: Shane Mosley (USA)
1. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
2. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
3. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
4. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
5. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
6. Danny Perez (USA)
7. Alessandro Duran (ITA)
8. Julian Holland (AUSTRL)
9. Cory Spinks (USA)
10. Maxim Nesterenko (RUS)
11. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
12. Reb Santillan (PHIL)
13. Alexander Vetoux (UKR)
14. Michel Trabant (GER)
15. Michele Orlando (ITA)
16. Antonio Diaz (MEX)
17. Hassan Al (DEN)
18. Chantel Stanciel (USA)
19. Oba Carr (USA)
20. Sergio Martinez (ARG)
21. Frederic Klose (FRA)
22. Rafael Pineda (COL)
23. Golden Johnson (USA)
24. Jose Rivera (USA)
25. Neil Sinclair (GB)
26. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
27. Miguel Rodriguez (MEX)
28. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
29. Peter Malinga (SA)
30. Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS

Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
2. Hector Camacho Jr (PR)
3. Michail Krivolapov (RUS)
4. Eamonn Magee (GB)
5. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
6. Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)
7. Ben Tackie (GHA)
8. Terronn Millett (USA)
9. James Leija (USA)
10. Wilfredo Vilches (ARG)
11. Ray Oliveira (USA)
12. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
13. Ricky Hatton (GB)
14. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
15. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
16. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
17. Soulemane M'Baye (FRA)
18. Vivian Harris (USA)
19. Junior Witter (GB)
20. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
21. Ricky Quiles (USA)
22. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
23. Teddy Reid (JAM)
24. Giuseppe Lauri (ITA)

24. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
25. Pablo Sarmiento (ARG)
26. Juan Mosquera (PAN)
27. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
28. Vince Phillips (USA)
29. Micky Ward (USA)
30. Michael Stewart (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
1. Juan Lazcano (USA)
2. Steve Johnston (USA)
3. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
4. Alex Trujillo (PR)
5. Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)
6. Julio Diaz (USA)
7. Lovemore Ndou (SA)
8. Carlos Gerena (PR)
9. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
10. Colin Dunne (GB)
11. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
12. Diego Gimenez (ARG)
13. Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)
14. Sandro Casamonica (ITA)
15. Michael Clark (USA)
16. Bobby Vanzie (GB)
17. Dennis Holbaek (DEN)
18. Leonard Dorin (CAN)
19. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
20. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
21. Aldo Rios (ARG)
22. Jongkwon Baek (KOR)
23. James Armah (GHA)
24. Moises Pedroza (COL)
25. Julian Wheeler (USA)
26. Efren Hinojosa (MEX)
27. Luis Lizarraga (MEX)
28. Omar Bernal (MEX)
29. Leavander Johnson (USA)
30. Sayan Sanchat (RUS)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
2. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
3. Jesus Chavez (USA)
4. Tiger Ari (PHIL)
5. Randy Suico (PHIL)
6. Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)
7. Lakva Sim (MON)
8. Philip Ndou (SA)
9. Affif Djelti (FRA)
10. Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)
11. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
12. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
13. Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)
14. Michael Gomez (GB)
15. Lamont Pearson (USA)
16. Pedro Miranda (SPA)
17. Mzonke Fana (SA)
18. Silvio Usini (ITA)
19. Claudio Martinet (ARG)
20. Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
21. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
22. Javier Alvarez (ARG)
23. Daniel Attah (NIG)
24. Alex Arthur (GB)
25. Hogu Min (KOR)
26. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
27. David Santos (USA)
28. Kinji Amano (JAP)
29. Koji Arisawa (JAP)
30. Zahir Raheem (US)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Erik Morales (MEX)
1. Injin Chi (KOR)
2. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
3. Michael Brodie (GB)
4. Naseem Hamed (GB)
5. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
6. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
7. Scott Harrison (GB)
8. Anthony Tshehla (SA)
9. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
10. Guty Espadas (MEX)
11. Luis Fuentes (MEX)
12. Istvan Kovacs (HUN)
13. Junior Jones (USA)
14. Panther Yanagida (JAP)
15. Augie Sanchez (USA)
16. William Abelyan (USA)
17. Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)
18. Fernando Velardez (MEX)
19. Frankie Toledo (USA)
20. Daniel Seda (PR)
21. Orlando Soto (PAN)
22. Pastor Maurin (ARG)
23. Francisco Dianzo (MEX)
24. Samuel Duran (PHIL)
25. Toshikage Kimura (JAP)
26. Roger Medal (NIC)
27. John Michael Johnson (USA)
28. Joan Guzman (DR)
29. Mkuseli Kondile (SA)
30. Cyril Thomas (FRA)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Willie Jorrin (USA)
1. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
2. Oscar Larios (MEX)
3. Osamu Sato (JAP)
4. Johnny Tapia (USA)
5. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
6. Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)
7. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
8. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
9. Marcos Licona (USA)
10. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
11. Wayne McCullough (IRE)
12. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
13. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
14. Fabian Oliva (ARG)
15. Yoshihisa Tomimoto (JAP)
16. Emmanuel Lucero (USA)
17. Vincenzo Gigliotti (ITA)
18. Yongjin Cho (KOR)
19. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
20. Wethya Singwangcha (THAI)
21. Angel Chacon (PR)
22. Hector Julia Avila (DR)
23. Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
24. Jaekwang Chung (KOR)
25. Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)
26. Masakazu Sugawara (JAP)
27. Tetsutora Senrima (JAP)
28. Jorge Solis (MEX)
29. Vladislav Antonov (RUS)
30. Brian Carr (GB)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Genaro Garcia (USA)
3. Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
4. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
5. Diego Morales (MEX)
6. Jess Maca (PHIL)
7. Noel Wilders (GB)
8. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
9. Mark Johnson (USA)
10. Cruz Carbajal (MEX)
11. Julio Zarate (MEX)
12. Abner Cordero (PHIL)
13. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
14. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
15. Spend Abazi (DEN)
16. Fabien Guillerme (FRA)
17. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
18. Francisco Mateos (MEX)
19. Ricardo Barajas (MEX)
20. Lester Fuentes (EL SALV)
21. Alexandre Yagupov (FRA)
22. Nicky Booth (GB)
23. Pete Frissina (USA)
24. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
25. Debind Thapa (NEP)
26. Fasan 3K-Battery (THAI)
27. Julio Cesar Medina (ARG)
28. Jimrex Haka (PHIL)
29. Frankie DeMilo (SWE)
30. Hyok Jun Kim (KOR)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
2. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)
3. Martin Castillo (MEX)
4. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
5. Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)
6. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
7. Luis Bolanos (COL)
8. Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)
9. Shingo Sasaki (JAP)
10. Erick Lopez (MEX)
11. Jose Angel Becerra (MEX)
12. Katsushigo Kawashima (JAP)
13. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
14. Vernie Torres (USA)
15. Eiji Kojima (JAP)
15. Takuya Kiya (JAP)
16. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
17. Takuya Kiya (JAP)
18. Trinidad Mendoza (MEX)
19. Luis Perez (NIC)
20. Alexander Knight (RUS)
21. Sot Sot Veeraphol (THAI)
22. Eric Barcelona (PHIL)
23. Julio Coronel (COL)
24. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
25. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
26. Mbwana Matumla (TAN)
27. Hiroaki Murakoshi (JAP)
28. Gonseng Duksoo (KOR)
29. Joel Avila (PHIL)
30. Jhunver Halog (PHIL)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
2. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
3. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
4. Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)
5. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
6. Alex Ali Baba (GHA)
7. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
8. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
9. Hawk Makepula (SA)
10. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
11. Everardo Morales (MEX)
12. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
13. Hayato Asai (JAP)
14. David Guerault (FRA)
15. Peter Culshaw (GB)
16. Damaen Kelly (GB)
17. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
18. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
19. Omar Narvaez (ARG)
20. Panieng Sasiprabha (THAI)
21. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
22. Jair Jimenez (COL)
23. Gilberto Keb-Baas (MEX)
24. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
25. Angel Priolo (COL)
26. Koji Koyama (JAP)
24. Dongkil Shin (KOR)
27. Melvin Magramo (PHIL)
28. Jason Booth (GB)
29. Mimoun Chent (FRA)
30. Phyong Choe Guk (KOR)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Yosam Choi (KOR)
1. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
2. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
4. Agustin Luna (MEX)
5. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
6. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
7. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
8. Pilkoo Kang (KOR)
9. Vuyisile Bebe (SA)
10. Surachai Saengmorokot (THAI)
11. Keisuke Yokoyama (JAP)
12. Jake Matlala (SA)
13. John Molina (COL)
14. Takayuki Korogi (JAP)
15. Luis Lazarte (ARG)
16. Chart Kiatpetch (THAI)
17. Victor Burgos (MEX)
18. Noboyuki Enomoto (JAP)
19. Celso Danggud (PHIL)
20. Rolly Lunas (PHIL)
21. Rodrigo Garcia (MEX)
22. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
23. Antonio Torres (MEX)
24. Jovan Presbitero (PHIL)
25. Minsoo Jang (KOR)
26. Jinho Kim (KOR)
27. Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)
28. Flash Villacura (PHIL)
29. Liborio Romero (MEX)
30. Oscar Murillo (NIC)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
1. Khulile Makeba (SA)
2. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
4. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
5. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
6. Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)
7. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
8. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
9. Noel Arambulet (VEN)
10. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
11. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
12. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
13. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
14. Manny Melchor (PHIL)
15. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
16. Juan Palacios (NIC)
17. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
18. Jairo Arango (PAN)
19. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
20. Fernando Luna (MEX)
21. Valentin Leon (MEX)
22. Hiroyuki Abe (JAP)
23. Wele Maqolo (SA)
24. Daisuke Iida (JAP)
25. Juan Centeno (NIC)
26. Omar Soto (MEX)
27. Mlungiselei Xokoloshe (SA)
28. Miguel Barrera (MEX)
29. Lorenzo Trejo (MEX)
30. Nico Thomas (INDO)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of December 2001)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Chris Byrd (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Mike Tyson (USA)
4. Fres Oquendo (USA)
5. Hasim Rahman (USA)
6. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
7. Jameel McCline (USA)
8. Monte Barrett (USA)
9. Oliver McCall (USA)
10. Ray Mercer (USA)
11. David Tua (NZ)
12. Clifford Etienne (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
1. Jorge Castro (ARG)
2. Vacant
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. James Toney (USA)
5. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
6. Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
7. Arthur Williams (USA)
8. Imamu Mayfield (USA)
9. Ezra Sellers (USA)
10. Louis Azille (DR)
11. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
12. Ramon Garbey (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)
2. Reggie Johnson (USA)
3. Eric Harding (USA)
4. Antonio Tarver (USA)
5. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
6. Clinton Woods (GB)
7. David Telesco (USA)
8. Will Taylor (USA)
9. Bruno Girard (FRA)
10. Lou Del Valle (USA)
11. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
12. Julian Letterlough (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
1. Thomas Tate (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Omar Sheika (USA)
4. Markus Beyer (GER)
5. David Starie (GB)
6. Charles Brewer (USA)
7. Antwun Echols (USA)
8. Mads Larsen (DEN)
9. Danilo Haussler (GER)
10. Sam Hill (USA)
11. Richard Grant (USA)
12. Dana Rosenblatt (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Carl Daniels (USA)
2. Felix Trinidad (PR)
3. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
4. Erland Betare (FRA)
5. Keith Holmes (USA)
6. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
7. Harry Simon (NAM)
8. Raymond Joval (HOL)
9. Howard Eastman (GB)
10. Ali Ennebati (FRA)
11. Robert Allen (USA)
12. Brian Barbosa (USA)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. Bronco McKart (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
4. J.C. Candelo (COL)
5. Jason Papillion (USA)
6. Kirino Garcia (MEX)
7. Francisco Castillejo (SPA)
8. Alex Bunema (USA)
9. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
10. Robert Frazier (USA)
11. Travis Simms (USA)
12. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vernon Forrest (USA)
1. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
2. Cory Spinks (USA)
3. Antonio Diaz (MEX)
4. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
5. Danny Perez (USA)
6. Rafael Pineda (COL)
7. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
8. Jose Rivera (USA)
9. Hector Quiroz (MEX)
10. Oba Carr (USA)
11. Julian Holland (AUSTRL)
12. Antonio Margarito (USA)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Ben Tackie (GHA)
4. Teddy Reid (JAM)
5. Zab Judah (USA)
6. Carlos Vilches (ARG)
7. Terronn Millett (USA)
8. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
9. James Leija (USA)
10. Ray Oliveira (USA)
11. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
12. Micky Ward (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Paul Spadafora (USA)
1. Angel Manfredy (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
5. Julio Diaz (USA)
6. Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)
7. Steve Johnston (USA)
8. Dennis Holbaek (DEN)
9. Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)
10. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
11. Julian Wheeler (USA)
12. Michael Clark (USA)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Steve Forbes (USA)
1. Lamont Pearson (USA)
2. Vacant
3. David Santos (USA)
4. Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)
5. Luis Lizarraga (USA)
6. Philip Ndou (SA)
7. Carlos Hernandez (USA)
8. Jesus Chavez (USA)
9. John Brown (USA)
10. Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)
11. Juan Arias (USA)
12. Daniel Attah (NIG)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manuel Medina (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Victor Polo (COL)
3. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
4. Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
5. Frankie Toledo (USA)
6. David Toledo (USA)
7. Augie Sanchez (USA)
8. Oscar Larios (MEX)
9. Michael Brodie (GB)
10. Istvan Kovacs (HUN)
11. Naseem Hamed (GB)
12. Mbulelo Botile (SA)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)
4. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
5. Fahsung 3K-Battery (THAI)
6. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
7. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
8. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
9. Fernando Velardez (USA)
10. Bones Adams (USA)
11. Vladislav Antonov (RUS)
12. David Donis (USA)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Tim Austin (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Rafael Marquez (MEX)
4. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
5. Pete Frissina (USA)
6. Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
7. Mark Johnson (USA)
8. Adan Vargas (MEX)
9. Juan Cordoba (ARG)
10. Diego Morales (MEX)
11. Johnny Tapia (USA)
12. Steve Dotse (GHA)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Felix Machado (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Martin Castillo (MEX)
4. Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)
5. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
6. Luis Bolanos (COL)
7. Samson 3K-Battery (THAI)
8. Adonis Rivas (NIC)
9. Julio Coronel (COL)
10. Yani Malhendo (JAP)
11. Jesus Rojas (VEN)
12. Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Hawk Makepula (SA)
4. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
5. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
6. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
7. Mike Trejo (USA)
8. David Guerault (FRA)
9. Damaen Kelly (GB)
10. Angel Priolo (COL)
11. Alex Ali Baba (GHA)
12. Jason Booth (GB)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Lopez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
4. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
5. Wandee Chareon (THAI)
6. Juan Keb Baas (MEX)
7. Zolani Petelo (SA)
8. Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)
9. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
10. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
11. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
12. Anis Roga (INDO)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roberto Leyva (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Miguel Barrera (MEX)
3. Daniel Reyes (COL)
4. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
5. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
6. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
7. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
8. Mohamed Rachman (INDO)
9. Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)
10. Surachai Saengmorokot (THAI)
11. Jaeho Kim (KOR)
12. Noel Arambulet (VEN)

CLASSIC

From THE RING, April 1981

BOXING'S "CAPTAIN MARVELOUS" BOLTS ONTO THE SCENE AS . . .

MARVIN HAGLER, CHAMPION

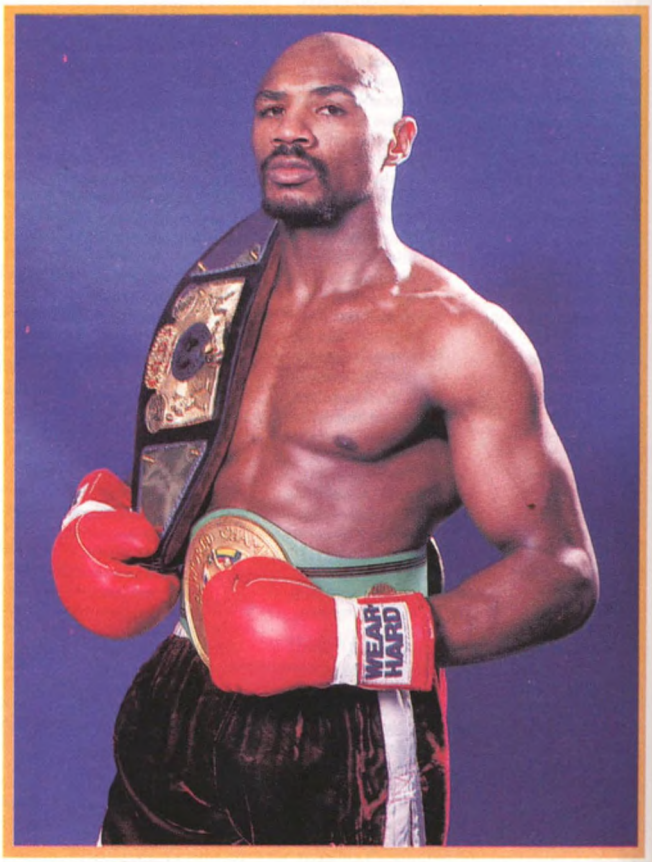
It's A Boxer ... It's A Middleweight ... It's A Champion ... It's Boxing's New Superhero

By Michael Katz

The Cape fingers its way toward Europe, but at the very end, just before it drops off the edge of America, it knuckles back in the direction of Boston. It is there, in the last room in the last building in this country—The Provincetown Inn—where Marvin Hagler has his training camp. The next room faces a different direction, Ireland. It must be snowing in Ireland this day, too.

Two days before Hagler's first defense of his middleweight title, a 10-inch snowstorm covers Provincetown. It is almost redundant, like building a moat around a man in solitary confinement. Two days before a fight, Hagler is seldom accessible even to his closest friends. Penetrating his litany of "destroy and destruction" as he psyches himself for his opponent is tougher than finding one's way through his southpaw defense. Certainly, hitting him is easier than interviewing him.

Not that Hagler is one of those snobbish "I-don't-talk-to-the-world" athletes one finds in other sports, particularly, I am told, in the Philadelphia Phillies' clubhouse. He is a private man who hides behind his shaved-head image, especially before a fight. Afterward, he can be disarmingly gentle. Last April, he had almost knocked Boogaloo Watts in my lap in Portland, Maine, and was standing over his fallen one-time conqueror, a look of sheer hate on his face as he kept beckoning Watts to "get up, get up." Later, the fury still burning, he had said, "I wanted him to get up because I hadn't fin-



Marvin Hagler was finally recognized as the best middleweight in the world by the early-1980s. At the time, he was the only fighter in any division to hold both the WBC and WBA titles.

Hagler looked mean and fought meaner, yet he had a tranquil side. A big part of his life outside the ring was his wife, Bertha, and their three children.

ished with him." But just a bit later, tipping one of his two beers in the Holiday Inn bar that would close at 9 p.m., he would gently admonish a well-wisher who wanted him to describe the two-round fight once again:

"Hey, man, now is the time to relax. I ain't just a fighter. I'm a human being, too."

And he gave Bertha, his soon-to-be wife, another hug.

On the two-hour drive through the snow to Provincetown, I didn't expect his humanity to show through his anger. For far too long, Hagler had been the finest middleweight in the world, but not the official champion. Rodrigo Valdes and Hugo Corro wanted no part of him when they were champion. Vito Antuofermo, the fearless warrior from Italy and Brooklyn, gave him a shot and kept his title with a controversial draw. Hagler, it says here, won that fight. And that made him even angrier—if that were possible. Now that he was champion, after a three-round disfigurement of Alan Minter, he had said on the phone he had not changed. "I'm meaner than ever," he promised. The Cape, he said, would keep him feeling that way until fight time when he was to defend against Fulgencio Obelmejias, an undefeated Venezuelan with 28 knockouts in 30 pro victories.

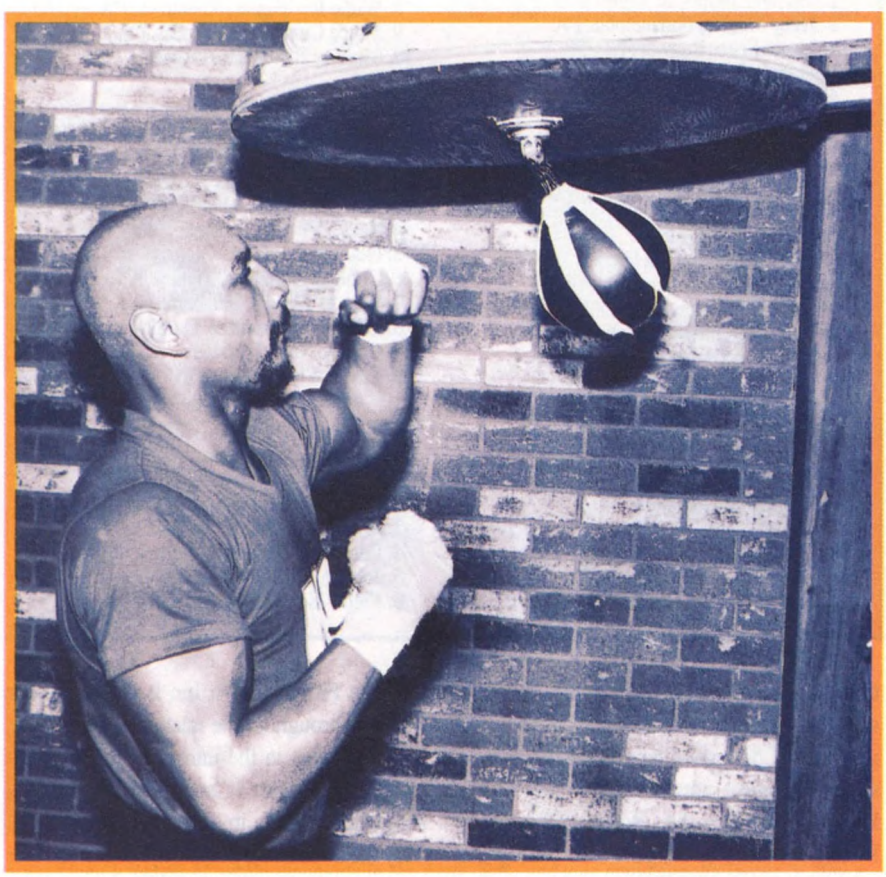
But there was something else urging him on, something as primeval as his frequent shrieks into the cold salt air when he was doing his roadwork. It was something called money. "Marvelous Marvin" finally had his crown and two belts—the only champion in the world to be recognized by both the WBA and WBC. And now he wanted what went with the jewelry. He had fought his way to the top and now, just two days before reminding the world that he was its best middleweight boxer—with a devastating eight-round show of power and poise—he began talking about his new goals. Money was becoming almost as important as pride.

His next two fights probably will be against the former champions, Minter and Antuofermo, and he will be heavily favored in both. His problem, as he saw it, was that there were few middleweights out there against whom he could make the kind of payday he feels he deserves.

"It's the story of my life," he said with the quiet acceptance of a man too wise to battle his fate. "I'm trying to make as much money as possible. I do believe I'm a million-dollar fighter. I'm a champion with two belts and there are guys with only one making much more money than me."

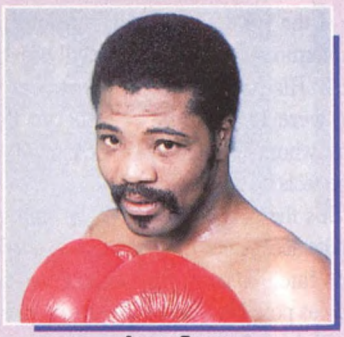
All he can do is wait, something with which he has had too much experience. He must wait for Ray Leonard or Thomas Hearns to grow into middleweights. He must wait for Tony Ayala Jr. and the rest of the corps of young middleweights to grow into the status of contenders.

He mentions Dwight Davison, Mustafa Hamsho, and Curtis Parker as possible challengers. And praises them. "They are good fighters," he says. "But their problem is not



Always one of the best conditioned athletes in any sport, Hagler loved to get away from it all when he trained, and found the perfect spot at the Provincetown Inn in a remote corner of New England.

THE RING RATINGS, April 1981



Aaron Pryor

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Larry Holmes, Easton, PA
1. **Mike Weaver,** Los Angeles, CA
2. **Gerry Cooney,** Huntington, NY
3. **Leon Spinks,** St. Louis, MO
4. **Michael Dokes,** Akron, OH
5. **Gerrie Coetzee,** South Africa
6. **Marty Monroe,** Los Angeles, CA
7. **Trevor Berbick,** Canada
8. **Greg Page,** Louisville, KY
9. **Bernardo Mercado,** Colombia
10. **Ken Norton,** Compton, CA

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT
World Champ: Matthew Saad Muhammad, Philadelphia, PA
1. **Eddie Mustafa Muhammad,** Brooklyn, NY
2. **Michael Spinks,** St. Louis, MO
3. **Jerry Martin,** Philadelphia, PA
4. **James Scott,** Rahway, NJ
5. **Marvin Johnson,** Indianapolis, IN
6. **Carlos DeLeon,** Puerto Rico
7. **Yaqui Lopez,** Stockton, CA
8. **Lotte Mwale,** Zambia
9. **Marvin Camel,** Missoula, MT
10. **Mustapha Wasajja,** Denmark

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Marvin Hagler, Brockton, MA
1. **Alan Minter,** England
2. **Dwight Davison,** Detroit, MI
3. **Vito Antuofermo,** Brooklyn, NY
4. **Fulgencio Obelmejias,** Venezuela
5. **Mustafa Hamsho,** Syria
6. **Curtis Parker,** Philadelphia, PA
7. **Wilford Scypion,** New York, NY
8. **Frank Fletcher,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Ronnie Harris,** Canton, OH
10. **Tony Sibson,** England

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ayub Kalule, Denmark
1. **Maurice Hope,** England
2. **Kenny Bristol,** Guyana
3. **Rocky Mattioli,** Australia
4. **Rocky Mosley,** Las Vegas, NV
5. **Carlos Herrera,** Argentina
6. **Walter Gomez,** Argentina
7. **Tyrone Rackley,** Tucson, AZ
8. **O'Dell Leonard,** Palmer Park, MD
9. **Nick Ortiz,** Puerto Rico
10. **Tony Ayala, Jr.,** San Antonio, TX

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ray Leonard, Palmer Park, MD
1. **Thomas Hearns,** Detroit, MI
2. **Wilfred Benitez,** Puerto Rico
3. **Pipino Cuevas,** Mexico
4. **Roberto Duran,** Panama
5. **Randy Shields,** N. Hollywood, CA
6. **Pete Ranzany,** Sacramento, CA
7. **Adolfo Viruet,** Hoboken, NJ
8. **Jorgen Hansen,** Denmark
9. **Luis Primera,** Venezuela
10. **Clint Jackson,** Nashville, TN

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Aaron Pryor, Cincinnati, OH
1. **Saoul Mamby,** New York, NY
2. **Jo Kimpuani,** Zaire
3. **Lennox Blackmore,** Guyana
4. **Sang-Hyun Kim,** Korea
5. **Domingo Ayala,** Puerto Rico
6. **Dujuan Johnson,** Detroit, MI
7. **Miguel Montilla,** Dominican Republic
8. **Willie Rodriguez,** Allentown, PA
9. **Bruce Curry,** Los Angeles, CA
10. **Monroe Brooks,** Los Angeles, CA

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Hilmer Kenty,** Detroit, MI
2. **Jim Watt,** Scotland
3. **Alexis Arguello,** Coral Gables, FL
4. **Aaron Pryor,** Cincinnati, OH
5. **Howard Davis Jr.,** Glen Cove, NY
6. **Rodolfo Gonzalez,** Mexico
7. **Sean O'Grady,** Oklahoma City, OK
8. **Vilomar Fernandez,** Dominican Republic
9. **Claude Noel,** Trinidad
10. **Edwin Viruet,** Puerto Rico

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Yasutsune Uehara, Japan
1. **Rafael "Bazooka" Limon,** Mexico
2. **Samuel Serrano,** Puerto Rico
3. **Roberto Elizondo,** Corpus Christi, TX
4. **Ildelfonso Bethelmy,** Venezuela
5. **Johnny Soto,** Los Angeles, CA
6. **Victor Echegaray,** Argentina
7. **Frankie Baltazar,** Los Angeles, CA
8. **Greg Coverson,** Kalamazoo, MI
9. **Leonel Hernandez,** Venezuela
10. **Ruben Riani,** Argentina

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Salvador Sanchez, Mexico
1. **Eusebio Pedroza,** Panama
2. **Wilfredo Gomez,** Puerto Rico
3. **Ruben Castillo,** Bakersfield, CA
4. **Rocky Lockridge,** Paterson, NJ
5. **Roberto Castanon,** Spain
6. **Patrick Ford,** Guyana
7. **Noel Arriesgado,** Honolulu, HI
8. **Juan LaPorte,** New York, NY
9. **Francisco Manzo,** Mexico
10. **Paul Ferrari,** Australia

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Wilfredo Gomez, Puerto Rico
1. **Sergio Palma,** Argentina
2. **Ricardo Cardona,** Colombia
3. **Leo Cruz,** Dominican Republic
4. **Mike Ayala,** New York, NY
5. **Nicky Perez,** Tucson, AZ
6. **Soon-Hyun Chung,** Korea
7. **Carmelo Negron,** New York, NY
8. **Jose Caba,** Dominican Republic
9. **Edwin Rosario,** Puerto Rico
10. **Juan "Kid" Mesa,** Los Angeles, CA

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jeff Chandler, Philadelphia, PA
1. **Lupe Pintor,** Mexico
2. **Julian Solis,** Puerto Rico
3. **Albert Davila,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Jorge Lujan,** Panama
5. **Roberto Rubaldino,** Mexico
6. **Oscar Muniz,** Los Angeles, CA
7. **Eijiro Murata,** Japan
8. **Jose R. Narvaez,** Argentina
9. **Norberto Cabrera,** Mexico
10. **Chol Ho Kim,** Korea

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Shoji Oguma, Japan
1. **Yoko Gushiken,** Japan
2. **Hilario Zapata,** Panama
3. **Peter Mathebula,** South Africa
4. **Betulio Gonzalez,** Venezuela
5. **Miguel Canto,** Mexico
6. **Willie Jensen,** Las Vegas, NV
7. **Luis Ibarra,** Panama
8. **Guty Espadas,** Mexico
9. **Charlie Magri,** England
10. **Chan-Hee Park,** Korea

that many people know it." Hagler, who had so much difficulty convincing promoters and networks of how good he was in the years of shameful neglect, now is trying to help others less fortunate than he. No one remembers Rodrigo Valdes or Hugo Corro telling the world just how good this shaved-head southpaw from Brockton, Massachusetts, was.

The Provincetown Inn is closed for the winter. Throughout the maze of its corridors, workers sweat in the unheated air. Most are aware that Hagler is here, but they are not sure where exactly in the sprawling complex. "Try the swimming pool," says a painter. "He works out there, and at least its heated."

Sure enough, by the indoor swimming pool of a summer resort in the dead of winter, the world middleweight champion was getting ready to work out. Willie Monroe, who, with Watts, is the only man to own a pro victory over Hagler, and Al Styles have been here the six weeks with the champion, but Hagler has finished sparring and this day he will work several rounds with Goody Petro-

Even though he had since become world champion, Hagler still wanted another crack at Vito Antuofermo, who had held him to a controversial draw in their 1979 title fight. Most viewers felt Hagler was robbed, but that wasn't enough to appease "Marvelous Marvin."

nelli, his trainer and, with brother Pat, his co-handler.

Marvin seems genuinely glad to see us. Rip Valenti, the only promoter who had faith in him from the beginning, loaned us his grandson, Dom, to drive us the 120 miles from our warm hotel through the blizzard. Our small entourage also consists of Ed Schuyler Jr., the Associated Press' number-one boxing writer, and Pat Putnam of *Sports Illustrated*. On the trip out, Schuyler can't believe what he is doing and keeps mumbling something about asking to cover the pro bowling tour. "You can cover bowling from the lounge," he reasons. "Marvin better be good."

He is almost sweet. What we don't know then is that he has seen videotapes of Obelmejias and knows what he is in for, an easy fight. He is unusually relaxed for two days before a bout.

"Ain't no women around here," he says, smiling. "There's nothing but concentration here."

Whatever Hagler might think of his opponent's chances, he is not taking any chances. He is an admitted physical fitness nut anyway and the long weeks of training get him in top psychological shape. Cornell Chavis, a light heavyweight from Brooklyn, hired on as a sparring partner, left camp after two weeks. "He had four more weeks here," Hagler says with a chuckle, "and just thinking about it drives you crazy."

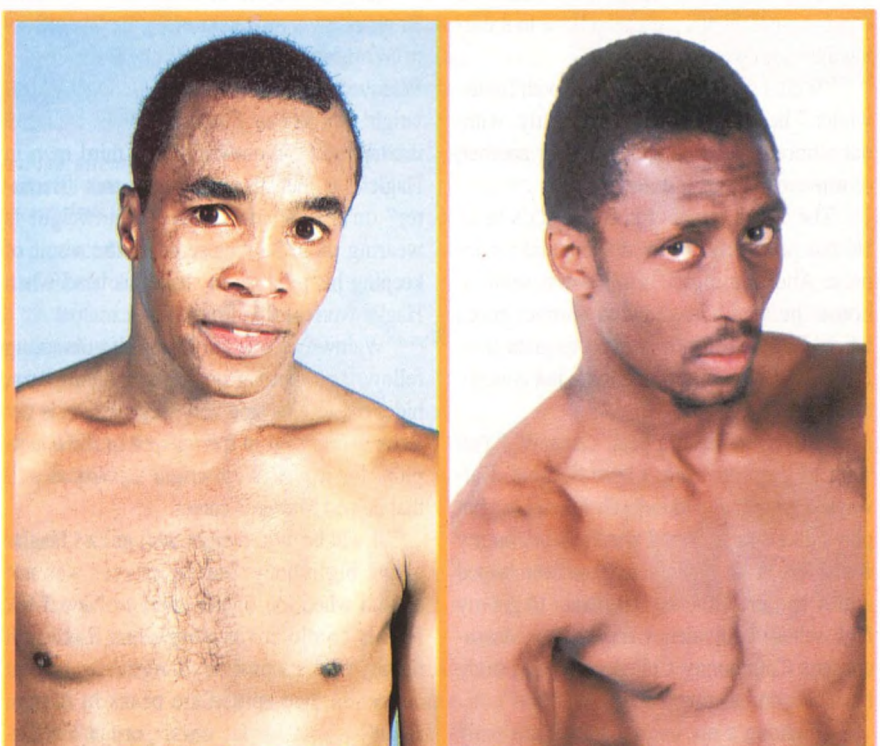
Hagler talks of other training camps of other champions. "They put themselves in jail," he says. And so will he. Hagler has been coming to the Provincetown Inn for four years and before that he worked at another resort owned by Brooke Evans. The owner of the Inn, who often accompanies Hagler on his morning runs through the sand dunes, is hoping to make his out-of-the-way resort a camp for other fighters. It certainly has not hurt Hagler. He thrives on the isolation. It reminds him of all the work he has to do; all the work he has already done. For much of the time, his longest conversations are with the seagulls, most of whom he has given names.

"It's good to forget about the hangers-on," he says. "It gives you a chance of keeping your feet down on the ground. Those kind of people hype you up and the next thing you know, your butt's on the ground. This is the time to work. They expect me to change, but I'm basically the same. I'm still the champion. I always felt I was the champion.

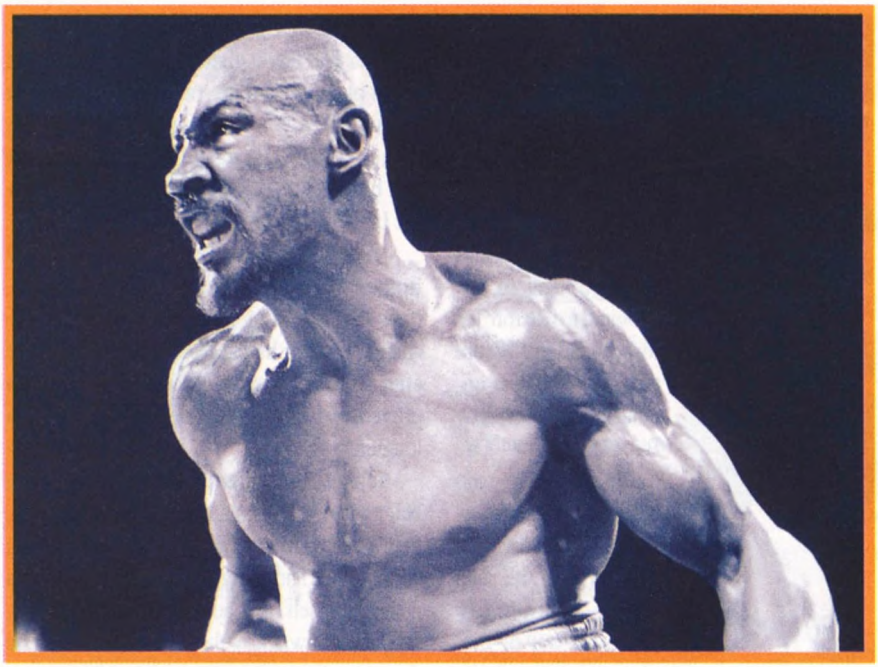
"The anger is still there. I'm still a hungry fighter. I haven't made the money I want. Now that I got my belt, it doesn't mean I've changed. I still have the bitterness inside me after all those years of politics. I'm trying to prove to people I should've been champion a long time ago."

It always surprises me just how endearing Hagler can be, this man with the shaved head, Fu Manchu mustache, and goatee talking about anger and bitterness and looking like a demon himself. But he never raises his voice, no matter how angry the words, and the basic decency of this fighter who has become one of the most popular sports heroes in the Boston area comes shining through. He is, after all, the same angry young man who spends much of his off-time visiting kids in hospitals; the same intense fighter who is a devoted husband and father.

"If I'm not mean," he says explaining his public image, "if I go in there like a little girl, I'm going to get hurt."



Hagler faced a dearth of name opponents in the early-'80s, and was consequently forced to play a waiting game, as recognized fighters such as Sugar Ray Leonard (above left) and Thomas "The Hit Man" Hearns (above right) grew into middleweights.



Hagler's intensity was legendary, and winning the titles did not soften him. "The anger is still there," Hagler said. "I still have bitterness inside me after all of those years of politics. I'm trying to prove to people I should have been champion a long time ago."

He is a tolerant man, this 28-year-old escapee from the Newark ghettos who, as a youngster, before meeting the Petronelli brothers, had a natural distrust of white people. As he stood in his warm room, looking out at the water and saying "Well, goodbye, birds," he was asked about Provincetown's other population, the gays who flock to it during the warm weather.

"Well, I guess them birds fly south for the winter," he says very matter-of-factly, without a trace of judgment, one way or another, of someone else's lifestyle.

The crown has not turned Hagler's head. He has been honored by mayors and governors. And one night, in a Boston seafood house, he was whisked into another room where President Carter waited to greet him. He appreciates the new attention, but concentrates elsewhere.

"After you reach a goal," he says, "You want to keep growing. I love fighting. I always say you have to enjoy it like a boy, but play it like a man. Now I want to work on my education. A lot of fighters have been wiped out by bad investments, but I want to get my high school equivalency diploma at Massachusetts Community College and then study business administration there.

"Fighting's not everything. There's my wife and three kids. And I'm a human being."

Business is good at Boston Garden the night of the Obelmejias fight. Everywhere you look in the lobby fans are buying Marvelous Marvin T-shirts and buttons. The selling of Hagler has begun. There is a long way to go from buttons to endorsements, but the man paving the way, Stephen Wainwright, is worth a story himself.

Across the street from the Petronelli Brothers' gym in Brockton are the law offices of Wainwright, Wainwright, Wainwright, Wainwright, and Wainwright. One Wainwright is a former Brockton mayor. Another is Stephen R. Wainwright, the third man in Hagler's corner, the one who wears "Barrister" on his sweater. Steve Wainwright is wearing more hats these days, the result of keeping his promise to shave his head when Hagler won the title from Minter.

Wainwright is a fun-loving, tequila-toting fellow who, among boxing people anyway, hides his serious side very well. But he is not to be overlooked in the making of the champion, for it was Wainwright's political pull that helped Marvin's career.

It will be Wainwright who guides Hagler to the big money, but the lawyer was not around when the fighter came to New York for his comic cover story. Bert Randolph Sugar, who keeps everything under his hat collection, had spilled the beans in Boston about his idea for the cover portrait of Marvelous Marvin to go along with THE RING series that included Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns posed with a tommy-gun as a gangster, and "Gentleman" Gerry Cooney sporting tux and cane. Sugar, the editor and publisher of this esteemed magazine, spilled very little else in Boston the weekend of the Obelmejias fight, except down his throat, which might explain why he and Wainwright should share credit for this issue's cover.

Marvin came to New York alone. He drove a Cadillac given to him by the city of Brockton and was welcomed to the big city by having it towed away from the illegal parking spot he had left it in near his hotel. To get the car out of hock, he had to spend $65 and a lot of time with an unsympathetic woman clerk.

"She gave me a hard time," Hagler said. "Then, when she found out who I was, she wanted my autograph. I wouldn't give it to her."

He was at THE RING offices, posing for perfunctory T-shirt pictures with Liz Gary, the magazine's bantamweight chief copy editor.

"Which side is your good side?" the photographer asked Marvin.

"Don't make no difference," he said as he and Liz put their arms around each other, he in a RING T-shirt, she in a Hagler one. "I show you the good side instead of the mean side, as long as my wife don't see this."

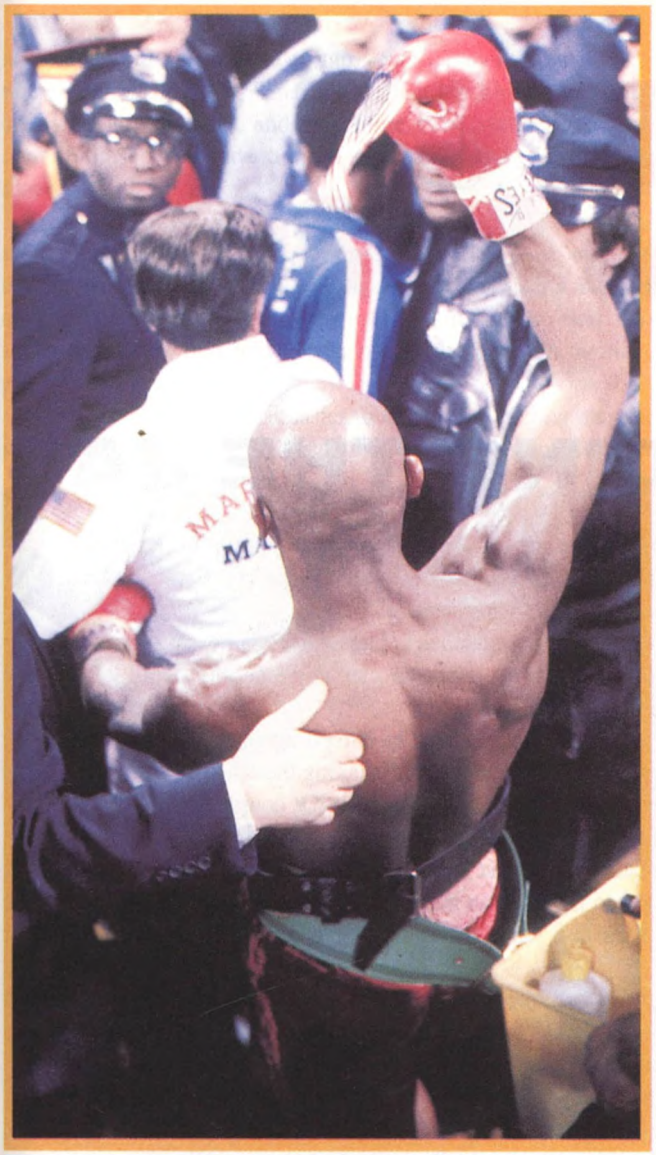
He was in a playful mood and proved a natural model. He talked of perhaps getting into the movies, appearing on an episode of *The Jeffersons* on television. With the first title defense behind him, he said he expected to get a lot more endorsements this year.

"They all wait for you to get the first defense out of the way," he said. "They know you're for real then."

It was time to leave THE RING office and head downtown to the studio where the cover picture was to be shot. A group, including George Kimball, the wild man who writes columns for the *Boston Herald*, headed down 31st Street looking for a cab. Marvin, wearing a cap, dark glasses, a rabbit fur coat, and carrying a case that looked like it could contain a machine gun, but which housed his WBA and WBC belts, strode along jauntily.

"This is the first time I've ever been to New York," said Kimball, "when I wanted to meet a mugger."

A few minutes later, the toughest middleweight in the world was changing into a red leotard. "I can't wait to see this costume," Hagler had said, and here it was, looking like Billy Batson's pajamas.



After working so long to get there, Hagler enjoyed the attention he received as middleweight champion of the world. But what he craved even more was the money that normally comes with such a prestigious title.

Sugar's wife, it seems, had said, "Shazam" and produced a lighting bolt fashioned from what must have been one of Bert's old slippers. She had added an "M" which was pinned to the leotard. Sugar gave Hagler a cape, which he said he took from a woman at the Salvation Army. Through it all, Hagler acted like a pro, flexing muscles and going from one heroic pose to another without prompting. The photographer just marveled at Marvelous. After a while, Hagler asked that a full-length mirror be brought so he could see how he was posing.

"I'm trying to look like Captain Marvelous," he said, "strong and courageous."

The result is on the cover. What's been inside Marvin all along remains. "Who's the best fighter in the world?" he asked himself. "It's going to be Marvin Hagler in the '80s. I've got a good five years left."

He wants Leonard and he wants Hearns. "I know I'm the best middleweight in the world," he said. Now he wants to get paid accordingly.

SHAZAM! ■

THE RING, April 1981

The Cover: Marvin Hagler didn't have quite everything he wanted in April 1981. Sure, he was recognized as the best middleweight in the world, but Hagler was looking for something more than title belts and the adoration of fans. "Marvelous Marvin" wanted to start making the kind of money he long deserved.

Budding Bumphus: Johnny Bumphus was just a novice pro, undefeated in five fights, when he was featured in THE RING's "New Faces." Bob Arum called Bumphus "the most outstanding prospect to come along since Ray Leonard." "Bump City" went on to capture the vacant WBA junior welterweight title in '84.

Hamsho Slides By Parker: Mustafa Hamsho's smile through the first two rounds against Curtis Parker quickly disappeared when Parker started finding the Syrian's face with right hands. But Hamsho survived the rocky moments to win a split decision and retain the number-one WBC middleweight ranking.

Philly's Finest: Philadelphia may have been second-rate when it came to team sports throughout much of the 20th century, but "The City Of Brotherly Love" could always boast about the many outstanding fighters who hailed from there, including world light heavyweight champ Jack O'Brien (pictured).

Fighter Of The Month: Eusebio Pedroza earned the honor by defeating Patrick Ford. The WBA featherweight titlist knocked out Ford in the 13th round in front of 16,000 fans in Panama City and a national ABC-TV audience.

THE A, B, C & DEAS OF BOXING

DEFENDING THE JAB

By Tommy Deas

You've watched the world's best fighters and read about them in this magazine, and now you want to give boxing a try, or at least learn a little more about the mechanics of the sport. Welcome to THE RING'S bi-monthly instructional feature on boxing's basics. Bear in mind, the techniques described here are just one of many approaches to the Sweet Science. The most important thing is to find a good coach and follow his instructions. All instructions on these pages are geared for an orthodox, or right-handed, stance. If you are left-handed, merely turn everything around.

Boxing, you should know by now, is the art of hitting without getting hit. Previous installments have covered boxing's basic punches—the jab, hook, right cross, and uppercut. Now it's time to start learning how to defend against them.

No matter how good your offense, avoiding punches is just as much a key to success as landing them. No matter how hard you hit, or how crisp your combinations, they will do you little good if you eat just as much leather in return.

This issue's installment will address the proper way to defend against the left jab, the most basic of punches. Future installments will be concerned with making the other punches miss.

There are two basic ways to avoid a left jab: slip it or parry it. Of course, you can always simply use your feet to stay far out of harm's way, but that doesn't present you with much of a chance to hit your opponent. And leaning back at the waist to avoid a punch is a dangerous practice that is not only difficult to master, but hard to turn into an offensive counter. It can also result, with the slightest misjudgment, in pulling back to a range where the opponent's punch is actually harder and more effective.

Slipping punches, however, gives you an opportunity to stay in range to land your own shots, and even when the opponent is able to land, it is usually a less solid blow that doesn't cause the kind of damage a clean punch would inflict.

There are basically two ways to slip a jab, inside or outside.

Slipping inside the jab refers to slipping your head to your own left as the jab approaches. That puts your head on the inside of his fist, where the rest of his body is. To slip a jab to the inside, you must use your eyes to see the punch coming and judge its speed of travel. As you see the jab coming your way, dip sideways at the waist a few inches to your left. As you learn to judge the jab properly, you will find that it whistles by your right ear rather than hitting you square in the nose or mouth.

To slip to the outside, the process is just the opposite. As the jab approaches, dip sideways at the waist a few inches to your right, to the outside of your opponent's body. This will cause the jab to travel harmlessly over your left shoulder, past your ear.

Remember that the object you are trying to avoid, the fist, is only a few inches wide. You don't have to move your head two feet to avoid something this size. You will probably overreact at first, moving your head too far out of position, but with time you will become comfortable enough to use only the motion necessary to avoid the blow. You will want to learn to slip in a smooth, efficient motion, rather than with a wild jerk of the head. It looks better to judges and makes it easier for you to keep your eyes focused on your opponent.

It is important to keep your hands high and your chin down as you slip the punch. If you get careless, you might find yourself on the receiving end of a punch that comes after the jab in combination. Keeping your hands in place also leaves you best prepared to punch back and make your opponent pay for his miss.

The parry is more difficult than slipping a punch, and will take much more practice to execute effectively. The technique involves using subtle contact to change the direction of the oncoming punch, and can only be done properly as your timing improves.

To parry a jab, hold your stance as the punch approaches. As it gets near its destination (your

face), use your right glove to tap your opponent's arm somewhere behind the wrist. This will deflect the blow's trajectory over your left shoulder, and may force your opponent to overcommit himself and leave himself off-balance and open for your attack.

Again, this is a very subtle move. Don't try to whack the arm too hard, because that can leave you off-balance, and certainly doesn't put you in any position to mount any counter offense. Just guide the blow over a few inches so that it is aimed to a point that leaves you out of the punch's intended path.

At first, you may find it easier to work more on blocking the jab with an open right glove—using it like a catcher's mitt—then gradually making this motion more of a parry. Blocking is another effective defensive move, but it tends to occupy your own hands and leave you out of position to turn your defense into offense. If you start reaching for the opponent's blows rather than letting them come to you, you will open yourself up to followup punches.

If you start with a blocking technique, learn to angle your right hand by dropping your thumb back toward your face, so it deflects the punch toward your left ear. From this move, you can slowly change your defensive technique into a proper parry. You can also deflect the jab downward, angling your fingertips forward, but this, again, is more difficult to turn into offense.

Practicing jab defense can be a little painful at first if your opponent isn't cooperative. It's best to pair off with someone who will take turns doing the throwing and defending, so each of you work without trying to hurt the other until you are both comfortable enough to work at a higher speed. Keep at it until you are comfortable that you can handle any jab your opponent might send your way. You will never get good enough that you are unhittable, but the harder a target you are to hit, the better off you will be. ■

Tommy Deas is a sportswriter for the Tuscaloosa (Alabama) News and a trainer of professional and amateur boxers.

Brad demonstrates the parrying technique for avoiding the jab. He does this by tapping Randy's glove below the wrist, which changes the trajectory of the punch and sends it sailing harmlessly over Brad's left shoulder.

Professional junior middleweight Brad Thompson demonstrates the correct method of slipping inside the jab thrown by amateur light heavy Randy Thompson. Note that Brad only had to move a few inches to avoid the punch.

PHOTOS BY KIM BISSELL

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

FROM HERO TO ZERO

If an elite fighter loses a fight, it obviously affects his status and mass appeal, but why should a single loss be so detrimental to his legacy? Boxing is a rough sport. Suck it up! Some of the greatest fighters of all-time had losses in double-digits, and not all of them came at the end of their careers.

Nowadays, when an up-and-comer such as Fernando Vargas steps up his game a little beyond his means and catches a beating, or a legendary fighter such as Felix Trinidad goes up in weight too rapidly and gets knocked out, he's no longer considered special. I think that's ridiculous. If Shane Mosley got knocked out tomorrow, would everybody lose faith in the awesome qualities he possesses? I realize that this is all part of the business these days and fighters compete on the most competitive level in sports, but these guys are supposed to be warriors. Wars don't end in a single battle.

BRIAN WAGNER
Green Brook, NJ

A MATTER OF MATURITY

I disagree with Max Kellerman's assessment that the Kostya Tszyu-Zab Judah fight should have been allowed to continue. Judah was clearly out of it and went down hard the second time. Showtime analyst Bobby Czyz was at ringside and called it a "good stoppage," and he should know, having been a world champion himself.

To me, two things became evident in the Tszyu-Judah fight: The winner was mature and confident, while the loser was immature and had no fight plan beyond the first round, other than hype.

HAROLD PLUNKETT
Williams, OR

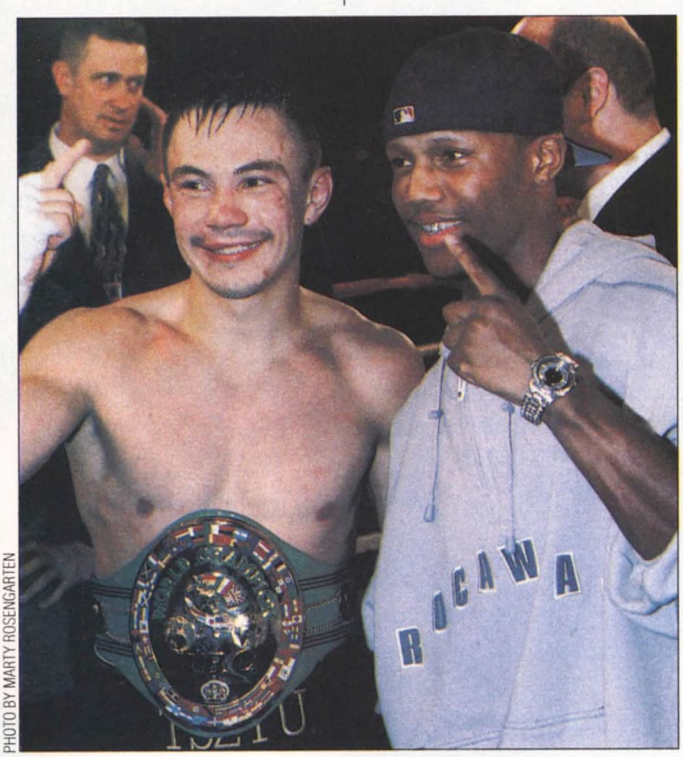


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

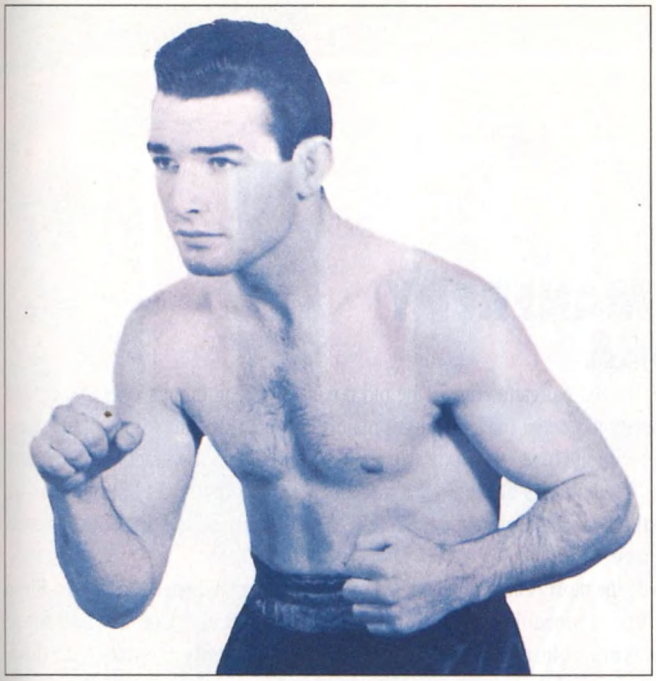
The difference in class was clear when Kostya Tszyu and Zab Judah clashed for the undisputed junior welterweight title in November. Readers Harold Plunkett and Nat Lanzan were both disappointed in former IBF titlist Judah's immature postfight tantrum.

As I watched Zab Judah carrying on after he was knocked out by Kostya Tszyu, I could not help but recall his self-serving comments after the Tszyu-Sharmba Mitchell fight, when Judah said Mitchell was "crying" after the fight was stopped. If Mitchell was crying, then Judah was wailing. He embarrassed himself and boxing with his antics, especially by physically assaulting referee Jay Nady, who was acting to save him from permanent injury. Tszyu, by the way, was a perfect gentleman, and represented his sport in an exemplary manner in his postfight comments. I would hope that Nevada will take the appropriate actions against the super-talented Judah, and that he and his advisers will embark on a program to bring his socialization and maturity level up to equal that of his boxing skills.

NAT LANZAN
St. James, NY

THE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS

Twelve-round title fights are ruining boxing. The sport is losing its magic because of the shortened distance. Look what happened in the Oscar De La Hoya-Felix Trinidad fight. If De La Hoya-Trinidad had been a 15-rounder, at the end of the 12th round,



How many fans remember 1940s lightweight contender Ray Lunny? Reader Robert A. Mohler certainly does, because Lunny was his boxing coach at Stanford University after his career ended.

Oscar would have had to decide whether to quit on his stool or go out and get knocked out with honor. But because it only went 12 rounds, there are fans that believe De La Hoya won. If you look at the first and third Joe Frazier-Muhammad Ali fights, you'll see how a fight can turn during the last three rounds of a 15-round bout. Bring back 15-round title fights!

BRIAN McCARRAHER
Citrus Heights, CA

MEMORY LANE

How nice it was to see your reprint of THE RING ratings for November 1941 in the February 2002 issue. The number-seven ranked lightweight was Ray Lunny, my boxing coach at Stanford University some 40 years ago. My only "A" at Stanford was in his boxing class, so seeing his name brought back fond memories, indeed.

ROBERT A. MOHLER
San Francisco, CA

A HELPING HAND

CNN/SI recently did a touching story on former middleweight titlist Gerald McClellan. It was a reminder to me of what he was as a fighter and how sad it is to see him in his present state. At the end of the piece, they displayed the address of a fund for Gerald. The address was only on the screen briefly, so I didn't write it down. Please print the address in the next issue, because I want to donate some money. I'm not a money man, so my donation will not be much, but I hope that this letter will inspire others to also send Gerald what they can.

MICHAEL WILSON JR.
Fort Mills, SC

[Editor's note: Donations can be sent to: Gerald McClellan Estate, Fifth Third Bank, P.O. Box 660, Freeport, IL 61032]

REID ROOTER

I am getting sick and tired of so many people dismissing David Reid as a has-been. I have followed his career since the Olympics and I know he still has a lot to offer. Right now, Reid is coming off some lackluster performances, but he's going to solve what has been the cause of his so-called downfall by storing energy for the later rounds, keeping his hands up, and moving his head more.

Reid still has time, so it would be stupid to rush things, but I'd like to see him face Antwun Echols, Charles Brewer, or Keith Holmes, and then go on to Bernard Hopkins, Joe Calzaghe, and Sven Ottke. The key for Reid is finding the right weight class to compete in, and once that's discovered, I see no reason why he cannot be a champion again.

CHRIS SMITH
Liverpool, England

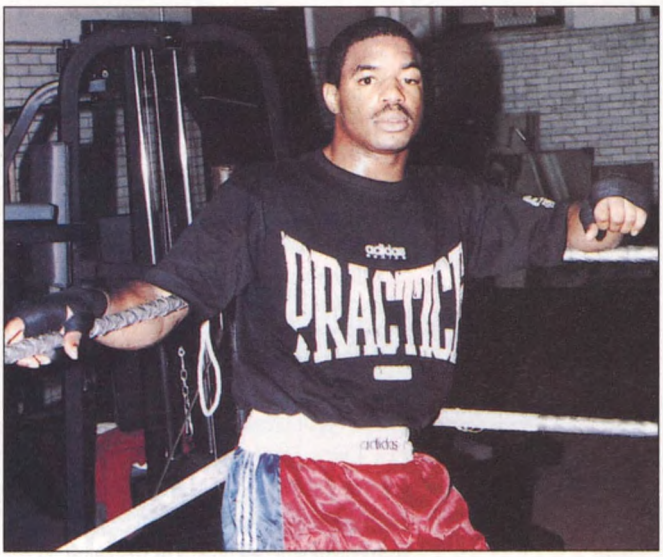
BYRD BOOSTER

In a day and age where there are very few pure boxers in the heavyweight division, one would think Chris Byrd has earned respect, but unfortunately it isn't so with most fans. Other heavies respect him, and that should account for something.

Byrd has taken the hard route to get where he is. He fought Ike Ibeabuchi when nobody else dared to, both the giant Klitschkos (in Germany), and a highly regarded power puncher in David Tua. I think it would be another shame on boxing if Lennox Lewis doesn't give Byrd the opportunity he deserves and instead fights Mike Tyson, who has fought below-average opponents in a very inactive past few years. Yes, there's more money in fighting Tyson, but does that mean he deserves it more than Byrd?

I think we need a champion that has morals and is a good role model, but I'm only one voice. I enjoy watching different styles and there are none quite as different as Byrd. The man has paid his dues and I hope he gets his chance.

LARRY D. KERNL
Enterprise, MS ■



Even though he's hasn't looked good since losing to Felix Trinidad in March of 2000, former Olympic hero David Reid still has supporters. Chris Smith of Liverpool, England, writes to say that he believes "The American Dream" can get back on top.

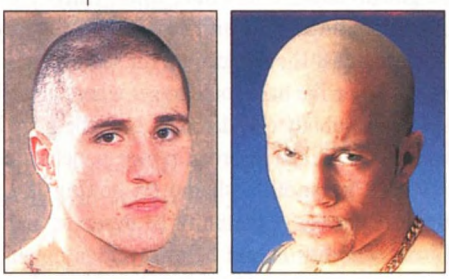
LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

"MUST-WIN" FOR MANFREDY AGAINST SPADAFORA

It may be one, two, three strikes you're out in the old ballgame, but in the old boxing game, nothing's ever that cut and dried. Veteran lightweight contender **Angel Manfredy** has taken three swings at major alphabet titles already, and after then-IBF 130-pound titlist **Diego Corrales** smoked him with the high heat in the last of those title shots, it seemed that Manfredy was going to have to ride the pine for a while. But funny things happen when you keep plugging away, and by virtue of his controversial decision win over highly regarded **Julio Diaz** last October, the 27-year-old Manfredy is back in the title picture, set to challenge IBF beltholder **Paul Spadafora** March 9 on HBO.

With all due respect to Spadafora, he looks to be the most beatable fighter Manfredy has ever challenged for a title. **Floyd Mayweather** is probably headed for the Hall of Fame, and Corrales and **Stevie Johnston** were both pound-for-pounders when Manfredy tangled with them. Spadafora, meanwhile, may be an elite fighter, but he also may be a carefully groomed clubfighter. Five defenses into "The Pittsburgh Kid's" title reign, we really don't know yet.



Spadafora-Manfredy: Lightweights with a lot to prove

Enter Manfredy. The former "El Diablo" represents for Spadafora a chance to prove his critics wrong. For Manfredy, meanwhile, Spadafora represents a last chance to bring home a major title. And Manfredy knows it.

"I'm looking at it like a must-win fight for me," Manfredy said. "It's do or die. The desire and determination are there more than ever for me. I was not living right when I fought Stevie Johnston. And I should not have been fighting at 130, like I did against Mayweather and Corrales. I am a lightweight, and I've learned from my mistakes, and you'll see the very best of Angel Manfredy on March 9."

Of course, we've heard that diatribe from Manfredy before, but if we see the same fighter who surprised a lot of experts by keeping pace with the previously undefeated Diaz, that could be enough to wrest the belt from Spadafora. Manfredy certainly believes that, stylewise, this titleholder is made for him.

"I don't feel like he knows what to do with aggression and pressure, guys who throw a lot of punches at him," Manfredy said of Spadafora. "I'm going to make the fight. He's a crafty fighter and a decent boxer, but he's too amateurish for me."

Spadafora, amateurish in style or not, is taking a very professional approach to the fight. He's not taking Manfredy lightly at all, and he's preparing more seriously than ever before.

"I think he's the toughest fighter I've faced so far," said Spadafora. "This fight means everything to me. It's the biggest fight of my life. I want to shine. I want to perform at my best. The best of me's gotta be there, because anything less than the best won't win against Manfredy."

The fight appears to be headed for Spadafora country, either Pittsburgh or West Virginia. But that doesn't bother Manfredy. He knows he's somewhat fortunate just to be getting another title shot, so he'll gladly put on his road uniform—and try to hit a home run.

"I don't care where we fight," Manfredy said. "I know I have to knock him out. So that's what I'll do."

LISTEN UP

Like Manfredy, another prominent veteran, **Vinny Paz**, may get his last shot at a title in early-March. As of press time, Paz was the leading candidate to challenge WBC super middleweight titlist **Eric Lucas** on March 1 on ESPN2 … Featherweight star **Prince Naseem Hamed**, who has been inactive since losing to **Marco Antonio Barrera** last April, plans to launch his comeback on March 23 … Japan will host a pair of 115-pound title fights in March. On March 9, WBA titleholder **Celes Kobayashi** will defend in Tokyo against undefeated Venezuelan **Alexander Munoz** (best known for knocking out former flyweight titlist **Sornpichai Pisnurachank** in December 2000), and two weeks later, WBC beltholder **Masamori Tokuyama** will take on **Kazuhiro Ryuko** in Yokohama. Any chance of the winners meeting to determine the *real* junior bantamweight champion? ■

Hamed: Looking to dance again in March

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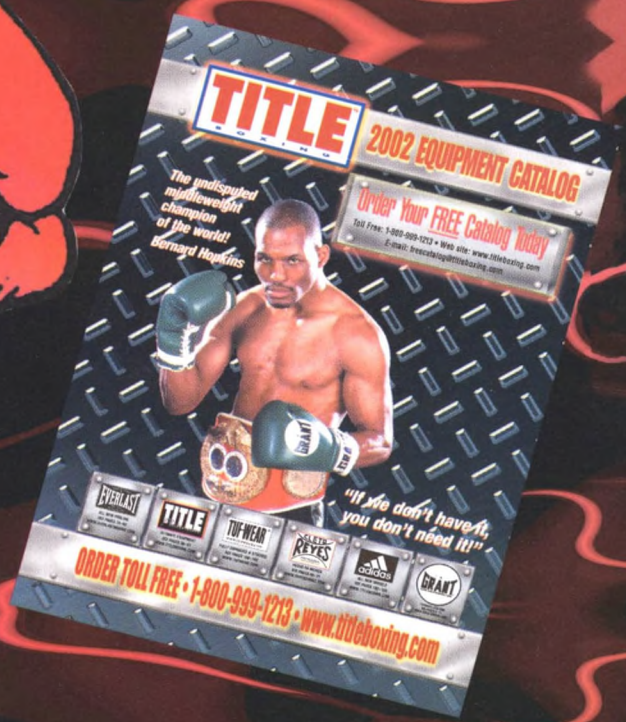

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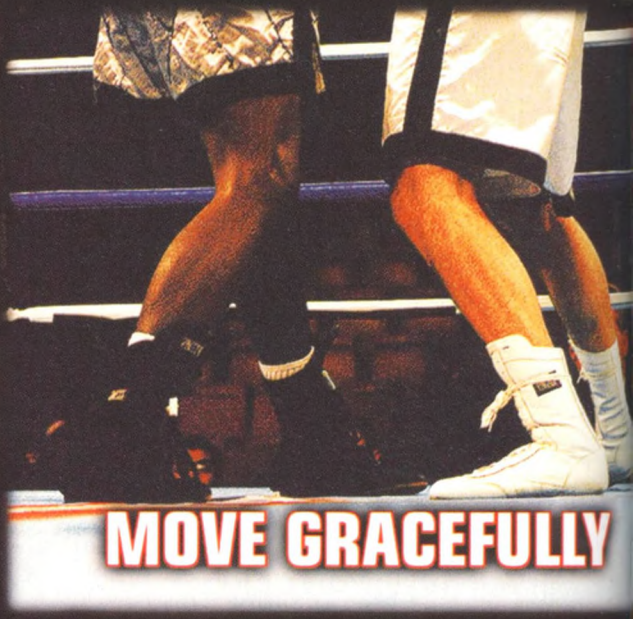
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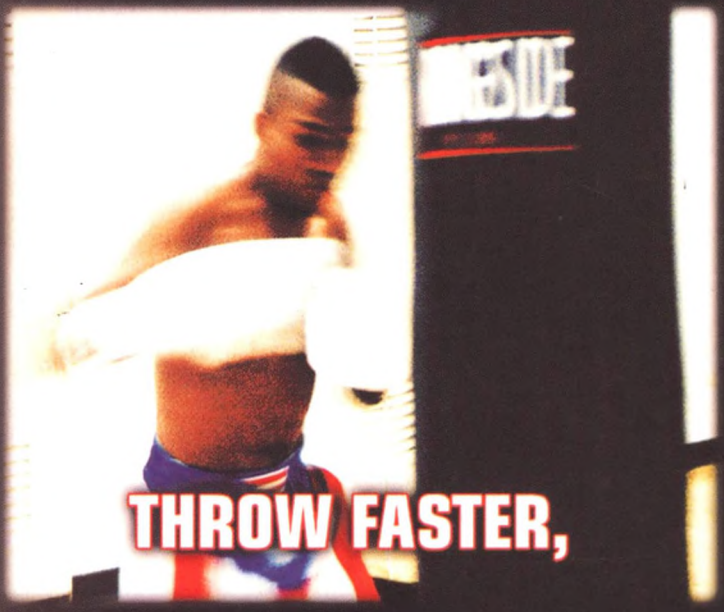
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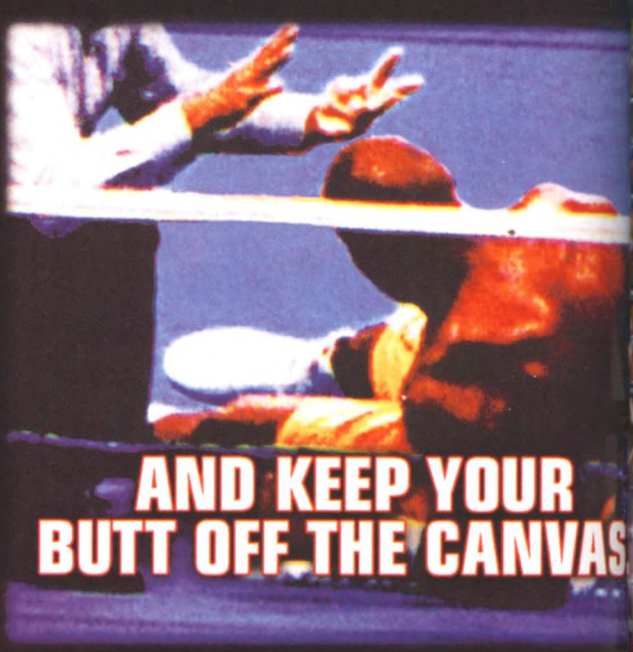
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